SC raises to death penalty Chiong convicts' life sentence

Story on PAGE A2

FPJ admits love child

MARIN in the '80s.

IT'S OUT. No more secrets, at least for now.

Fernando Poe Jr. has a love child by Anna Marin, a movie starlet in the 1980s.

The actor, standard-bearer of the opposition Koalis-

FPJ ADMITS/ A22

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

San Fernando feasts on 1.3-km 'longaniza'

By Tonette Orejas
PDI C. Luzon Desk

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO—What could be the country's longest chain of small *longaniza* (native pork sausages), stretching for 1.3 km,

SAN FERNANDO/ A22

MARAMING BITUKA NG MGA KAPATID KO ITO, AH!

email: feedback@inquirer.com.ph
Wednesday, February 4, 2004 ★★★ 56 pages / 4 sections / vol. 19 / no. 58 P15
website: www.inq7.net

Peso sinks to 56.20 to $

It's now up to SC to decide Poe citizenship

By Martin P. Marfil and Alcuin Papa

NOW it's up to the Supreme Court.

The high court yesterday took cognizance of the citizenship issue hounding opposition coalition candidate Fernando Poe Jr.

In a resolution dated Jan. 27 but released only yesterday, the high court recognized the petition filed by lawyers Maria Jeanette Tecson and Felix Desiderio, as well as another petition filed by lawyer Zoilo Antonio Velez of the Integrated Bar of the Philippines Mizamis Oriental-Cagayan de Oro chapter.

The high court—"without giving due course to the petition"—also ordered the Commission on Elections, the Office of the Solicitor General, the counsel of Poe and lawyer Victorino Fornier to submit their comment on the disqualification cases within 10 days. Fornier had filed a disqualification case against Poe with the Comelec.

After the Comelec's First Division dismissed the case, Fornier filed a motion for reconsideration with the election agency.

The motion is pending, but opposition Sen. Aquilino Pimentel Jr. claimed yesterday that the Comelec had already reached a decision.

Pimentel, who is running for reelection under Poe's ticket, said he obtained a copy of a 12-page

NOW/ A22

"A VERY important date in our history," President Macapagal calls the reopening of the National Steel Corp. in Iligan City during her speech on Tuesday. She was given a tour of the complex by Prammod Mittal, president of the NSC management board. NSC creditors signed an agreement with India's Global Infrastructure Holdings Ltd. to rehabilitate the country's only integrated steel plant.

VAL HANDUMON

Symbol of RP industrialization reopens

By Gil Cabacungan Jr. and PDI Mindanao Bureau

"THE SYMBOL of our country's industrialization is finally back," President Macapagal-Arroyo yesterday said as she ushered in a new era in the Philippine steel industry with the re-opening of the National Steel Corp. in Iligan City, the country's only integrated steel plant.

In her brief remarks at the NSC compound, Ms Macapagal recalled her government's efforts to bail out the steel giant buried under a ton of debt which forced its former Malaysian owners to shutter the plant in 1999.

The President said the reopening of the steel plant should create 5,000 jobs and restore Iligan province as a the center of Mindanao's industrialization.

With a capacity of 1.5 million metric tons a year, Malacañang expects the NSC to generate roughly $750 million in annual revenues from domestic and international sales.

Malacañang also estimated that the NSC would inject P4 billion into the country's gross domestic product, P130 million in real estate taxes, P27 million in local taxes and P1 billion in taxes to the national government.

Ms Macapagal said the rehabilitation of NSC became possible after former Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohammad agreed to convert NSC's debts with Malaysian banks into shares.

Ms Macapagal thanked the

SYMBOL/ A9

Int'l bank warns of crisis a la Argentina

By Clarissa S. Batino
Business
and Gil Cabacungan Jr.

THE PESO closed at a record low of 56.20 yesterday, making it the biggest loser among Asian currencies as foreign investors, worried over political and economic uncertainties in the country, continued to dump local stocks and bonds to buy back the dollars they sold last month.

The Philippine currency was trading at a lower rate in the futures market in Singapore. The offshore non-deliverable forward market priced the one-month peso at 56.55 per dollar, implying a spot rate of 56.30.

As if this were not enough, the London-based Standard Chartered Bank (SCB) warned that the country could slip into a foreign debt crisis like what happened to Argentina if the winner in the May 10 presidential election failed to implement fiscal reforms and restore investor confidence in the economy.

A study prepared by SCB's Southeast Asian chief economist Steve Brice said that while a default on the country's foreign obligations was not imminent at this point, it was possible that the country could fall into a debt crisis over the next five years if the new government "loses the faith of foreign investors through irre-

PESO/ A21

Political prostitutes? Who's not?

By Carlito Pablo and TJ Burgonio

BUT aren't they all?

Brig. Gen. Victor Corpus' description of vice presidential candidate Sen. Loren Legarda as a "political prostitute" elicited this question yesterday from a party-list representative, who pointed out that no traditional politician would come out "clean" in the May elections.

According to Sanlakas Rep. JV Bautista, neither administration nor opposition politicians can claim political purity because of the past and continuing horse-trading of both camps.

"Corpus could be partially correct on Loren," Bautista said, but he observed that the general was being "completely naive" regarding "the whole political landscape."

"That's the problem with being on the side of the beleaguered Queen," Bautista said. "We think there are more political prostitutes inside Malacañang than any other place outside."

Corpus resigned last year as military intelligence chief in the wake of the failed mutiny of the Magdalo group. In his resigna-

POLITICAL/ A22

ANTI-MEASLES CAMPAIGN

National vaccination campaign against measles financed by the Japanese government is launched by Health Secretary Manuel Dayrit (left) and Jean Marc Olive, World Health Organization representative in the country.

AFP

It's House vs Senate on Manapat

By Carlito Pablo

WAS IT ALL part of an opposition script?

An administration congressman yesterday turned the tables on the opposition senators championing the alleged forgery case against archivist Ricardo Manapat.

Rep. Prospero Pichay Jr. (Lakas, Surigao del Sur) said the opposition led by Sen. Edgardo Angara "stage-managed" the testimony of two witnesses reportedly involved in the processing of microfilm records of opposition candidate Fernando Poe Jr.'s birth certificate, and of the marriage contract of Poe's father and a certain Paulita Gomez.

Pichay was referring to William Duff and Victorino Floro III, employee and part owner of Florofoto, respectively, whose shop in Quiapo was supposedly used to microfilm the documents.

Duff and Floro executed sworn statements that Manapat came to their shop on Jan. 10 to have certain documents put into microfilm, and that he (Manapat) came back on Jan. 12 and 17.

But Pichay pointed out that the two sworn statements were notarized on Jan. 2—or eight days before Manapat's alleged first visit.

"The senators have stage-managed this," Pichay said. "How can

IT'S HOUSE/ A22

FOND FAREWELL

The Senate holds a necrological service for an esteemed colleague, former Vice President Salvador Laurel. His widow, Celia, is flanked by his brother Sotero Laurel and Senate President Franklin Drilon.

JESS YUSON

JDV: It's deadlocked, '03 budget reenacted

By Carlito Pablo, Christine O. Avendaño and Cynthia D. Balana

WITH efforts to break the impasse on the proposed budget for 2004 failing, leaders of the House of Representatives are confident that the 2003 budget of P804 billion will be reenacted this year.

Senate leaders, however, are still hoping that the House will change its position and agree to the proposed P864.8-billion budget for 2004.

"It's deadlocked. The (2003) budget is reenacted," Speaker Jose de Venecia Jr. said. He defended the House position that the country had no funds to underwrite the proposed budget for this year.

"We have just staved off a new crisis in the budget deficit this year with a reenacted budget," De Venecia said.

Just two days before Congress takes a recess, the Senate is playing hard ball with the House as it pushes for the adoption of the proposed budget.

For the second straight day, the Senate adjourned yesterday its session a few minutes after it

JDV/ A22

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Eastern Mindanao will experience mostly cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers and thunderstorms. The rest of the country will be partly cloudy to at times cloudy with isolated rainshowers.
SOURCE: PAGASA

Metro Manila	Partly Cloudy	Iloilo/Bacolod	Partly Cloudy
Baguio	Partly Cloudy	Roxas	Partly Cloudy
Tuguegarao	Partly Cloudy	Cebu	Partly Cloudy
Laoag	Partly Cloudy	Tacloban	Partly Cloudy
Clark Zone	Partly Cloudy	Gen. Santos	Partly Cloudy
Tagaytay	Partly Cloudy	Zamboanga	Partly Cloudy
Legazpi	Partly Cloudy	Cagayan de Oro	Partly Cloudy
Calapan	Partly Cloudy	Davao	Partly Cloudy

COMPILED BY: RAY LEYESA, PDI RESEARCH/02/04/04

6 in Chiong sisters rape-murder case get death

By Jhunnex Napallacan
PDI Visayas Bureau

THE SUPREME Court yesterday raised the sentence of a lower court from double life imprisonment to death penalty for six of the seven convicted for the rape and murder of the Chiong sisters, Marijoy and Jacqueline, in Cebu City on July 16, 1997.

In a unanimous decision, the high tribunal sentenced to death Juan Francisco "Paco" Larrañaga, great grandson of the late President Sergio Osmeña; Jozman Aznar of Cebu's landed Aznar clan; Ruen Adlawan, Alberto Caño, Ariel Balansag and James Andrew "Em-em" Uy.

Lawyer Ismael Khan, spokesperson of the Supreme Court, confirmed last night the high court's unanimous decision.

Another convict, James Anthony "Wang-wang" Uy, younger brother of James Andrew, was spared the death penalty because he was only 16 at the time the crime was committed, Khan said.

The seven convicts, who all belong to prominent families in Cebu, are now detained at the National Bilibid Prisons after the late Judge Martin Ocampo of the Cebu Regional Trial Court found them guilty on May 5, 1999.

All the convicts, except for James Anthony, were sentenced to death for the kidnapping with serious illegal detention, rape and murder of Maryjoy Chiong, Khan said.

Another life imprisonment term was meted out all the seven convicts for the kidnapping of Jacqueline Chiong.

"That should be the proper penalty on the basis of the law and the facts," Khan said.

Khan said the execution of the six death convicts should take place after one year since the SC handed down the decision.

Khan said the lawyers of the convicts can ask for reconsideration, but it is very difficult for them to get a favorable ruling since it was a unanimous decision.

Chief Justice Hilario Davide Jr. did not take part in the deliberation while Justice Adolf Azcuna was on vacation. Only 12 justices took part in the decision.

Ocampo based his decision on the eyewitness account of accused-turned-state-witness Davidson Valiente Rusia, who had testified how his friends abducted the sisters at Ayala Center-Cebu on July 16, 1997, raped them in a house in Guadalupe, and then raped them again in Sitio Tan-awan, Carcar town.

Rusia also said Marijoy was thrown off the cliff in Tan-awan on the order of Josman Aznar, and that Jacqueline was brought back to the city. A corpse said to be Marijoy's was found two days later. Jacqueline remains missing to this day.

The gruesome crime shocked Cebu residents, shattering the myth that the southern city was free of heinous crime.

Months after handing down the verdict, Ocampo was found dead in a hotel room on Oct. 7, 1999 with a bullet wound in his head, slashes in both wrists and ankles and bruises in the chest.

Forensic technicians of the National Bureau of Investigation said Ocampo committed suicide, a finding later affirmed by Dr. Racquel Fortun, an expert hired by the Senate committee on justice and human rights.

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Public officials face probe for environmental law violations

By Volt Contreras

PUBLIC officials who failed to enforce the country's nearly 130 environmental laws or played deaf to related complaints will be the special target of a new investigative arm of the Office of the Ombudsman.

Ombudsman Simeon Marcelo, in an agreement with the Integrated Bar of the Philippines, formally opened yesterday the Office of the Environmental Ombudsman.

The IBP, which counts 43,000 members nationwide, is offering to handle pro bono cases to be filed by environmental advocates and the general public with the new subagency, according to IBP national president Jose Anselmo Cadiz.

Marcelo said he was considering a short list of candidates for the post of Environmental Ombudsman. The position is separate from the one held by the resident ombudsman assigned to the Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

Action team

In a parallel move, IBP has formed its own National Environmental Action Team (NEAT) headed by lawyer Antonio Oposa Jr. to receive and follow up complaints. The team can help the ombudsman prepare pleadings, interview witnesses, or attend trials when the cases reach the courts.

The NEAT is further divided into smaller teams focusing on specific environmental cases, such as those dealing with solid waste, air pollution, marine resources, forests and wildlife sanctuaries.

At the signing yesterday, officials admitted the creation of the office was borne out of "frustrations" that have beset concerned citizens who want to stop private enterprises that pollute or squander natural resources but are not addressed by authorities.

The country has passed some "130 environmental laws," said Overall Deputy Ombudsman Margarito Gervacio, "and yet the people are frustrated and discouraged to pursue cases against public officials."

"Our air in Metro Manila is said to be the second dirtiest in the world and our (bottled) water has become more expensive than gasoline. If we could only implement one percent of those laws we would not be in this mess," Oposa said.

With Doy's death, Villar takes over NP

By Cynthia D. Balana

SEN. Manny Villar will take over as chair of the Nacionalista Party next week to replace former Vice President Salvador Laurel who died last week of cancer.

This was according to his wife, Las Piñas Rep. Cynthia Villar who also joined the party as congressional candidate for the same district.

The couple ran as independent in the last elections although they later joined the ruling Lakas-NUCD.

The congresswoman said it was not yet certain whether they would coalesce again with the administration in the coming elections. The senator is not running in the May elections. His term as senator ends in 2007.

The congresswoman said the post of NP chair was offered to her husband as early as November but the latter declined, saying he was not yet ready.

She said the senator finally considered the offer following Laurel's death.

Speaker Jose de Venecia, president of the Lakas-Christian Muslim Democrats, said he hoped that the Villars would continue their coalition in the coming elections.

"We have an existing coalition with the Nacionalista under Vice President Laurel. It's up to them if they want to continue the coalition or not," he added.

Laurel's ashes, gathered in a simple urn, were brought to the House plenary session at 1 p.m. to enable congressmen to pay their last respects.

Ex-mayor, treasurer sentenced to 9 years

By Armand Nocum

THE SANDIGANBAYAN has sentenced a former Nueva Ecija municipal mayor and his treasurer to nine years in prison for their failure to pay P3.63 million to a private contractor who was contracted to build a bridge in the town in 1991.

Former Mayor Franklin Eduardo and former municipal treasurer Benjamin Bote were also ordered by the Sandiganbayan's fifth division to indemnify private complainant Rodolfo Espina, owner of the Espina Dynamic Builder, the P3.63 the government owes Espina.

Divers find no body in sunken ship

OSLO—Divers on Monday inspected the wreck of a cargo ship, the Rocknes, which capsized in a Norwegian fjord two weeks ago, in a bid to locate the bodies of 13 sailors presumed to have been trapped inside, police said.

"Two divers drilled through the hull and entered at the cafeteria level this afternoon. They didn't find anything. Two other divers have taken over," Trygve Hillestad, police spokesman in the western Norwegian town of Bergen, told AFP.

Two divers at a time worked on Monday in 80-minute shifts at depths of about 12 meters on piercing the hull of the still overturned Rocknes.

A new team was set to work late into the afternoon, despite the onset of darkness, and the operation was expected to continue Tuesday, Hillestad said.

The Norwegian-registered Rocknes was carrying a load of rubble to Germany when it capsized in minutes in a narrow passage of the Raune fjord on Jan. 19. Reports indicated that it hit an underwater reef and took on water before overturning.

Eighteen of the 30 crew were killed, including 16 Filipinos, but only five bodies have been recovered.

The vessel was last week towed to a maintenance shipyard where it is now docked, still overturned.

"We are progressing slowly for security reasons. All underwater operations imply a certain risk, and especially in this case where everything is upside down," Hillestad said.

Meanwhile, the International Fund for Animal Welfare has set up a rehabilitation center near the site of the accident in order to treat the 1,000 sea birds, mostly eiders and herring gulls, who were covered in oil after the Rocknes leaked part of its 500 tons of fuel.

Eleven workers were on site to wash each bird by hand, which takes about 30 to 45 minutes. After being cleaned, they will be placed in special outdoor pools for seven to 10 days in order to recuperate.

AFP

All's well with unpaid poll workers

COMMISSION on Elections Chair Benjamin Abalos yesterday declared the issue over unpaid benefits for Mindanao election officials over.

In a phone interview, Abalos maintained that he had been able to obtain funds for the benefits, which included their Christmas bonuses.

Abalos said he had earlier ordered the release of the amelioration fund of the employees but was told that they also have unpaid Christmas bonuses which was traditionally given to them.

Asked if this meant that the planned strike on election day would be staged, Abalos said that he had already talked to them and that the problem has been resolved.

The checks for the Christmas bonuses of the employees based in other regions were supposedly sent yesterday.

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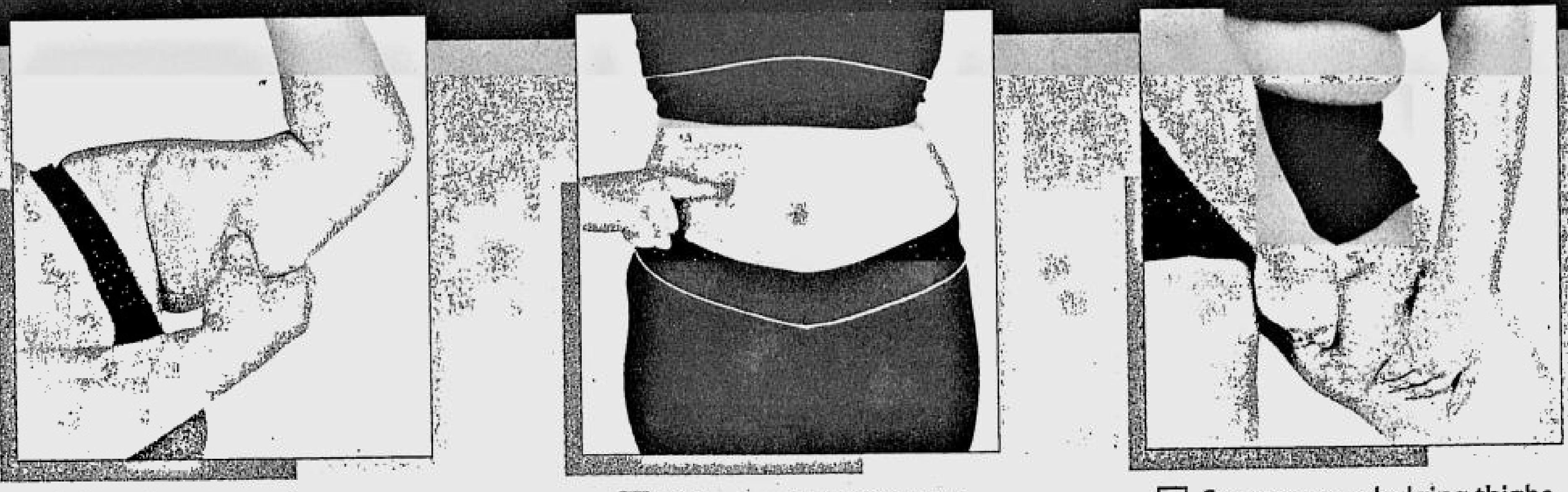

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SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT ON VICTOR S. LIMLINGAN

On January 12, 2004, full-page ads appeared in the Inquirer and the Philippine Star that attacked Professor Victor Limlingan of the Asian Institute of Management and former Director of the Civil Aeronautics Board (CAB), as a traitor to our country. While purportedly placed by several labor organizations banding together under the name of "Kongreso ng Pagkakaisa ng Manggagawang Pilipino", the ad carried no signatories. On January 21, one of the supposed authors of the ad, the Confederation of Filipino Workers, wrote the Inquirer to deny any participation in the paid advertisement or the accusations against Prof. Limlingan.

The ads are deplorable, but these are not isolated instances. These are part of a long series of smear stories and cowardly attacks in the media that are designed to intimidate and besmirch the good name of public servants and citizen reformers who advocate sound public policy in our country. In the case of Prof. Limlingan, the campaign of vilification has been especially virulent because he has been a leading figure in the reform of Philippine aviation policy. As professor at AIM, he laid the compelling case for aviation liberalization as an essential requisite for economic modernization. As a member of the Civil Aeronautics Board during the term of President Fidel V. Ramos, he helped to craft and implement Executive Order 219, which mandates the liberalization of aviation policy and defines the national interest as consisting of the larger interest of the country, especially the users of air services.

Far from being a traitor, Professor Limlingan has performed invaluable service to our people and our country through the laudable reforms that he has championed and the many benefits conferred on providers and users of air services. Among these are:

- the deregulation of domestic aviation, which enabled the public to enjoy more flights and lower air fares, and more regions of the country to have regular air services;
- the liberalization of air cargo services in the country, which has proved to be a boon to Philippine exporters and the country's trade with the world;
- the activation of the Mactan International Airport as an international gateway, which has resulted in an increase in international passengers arriving and leaving directly from Cebu;
- the signing of air agreements, which allowed more foreign carriers such as Cathay Pacific Airways, Singapore Airlines, Korean Airlines, and Asiana, to fly in and out of the country, thus benefiting tourism, trade and investments; and
- the specific expansion of air services to the destinations of Filipino OFWs in Asia and the Middle East.

For working for these reforms, Professor Limlingan has been vilified in countless attacks in the media and even faced charges filed by PAL before the Ombudsman and Sandiganbayan. None of these tactics of intimidation have succeeded. The administrative case against him was dropped by the Ombudsman. **It is one more lie of his detractors to say that he has been barred for life from holding any public office.**

In the face of these attacks on his person and his good name, we the undersigned stand with Professor Limlingan in his fight for sound aviation policy in our country. We deplore the tactics of his detractors as foul and craven and we urge him to continue the good work!

SIGNATORIES

Felipe Medalla
Former NEDA Director General (1998-2000)
Chairman, Foundation for Economic Freedom

Jesus B. Garcia, Jr.
Former Secretary
Department of Transportation and Communications
Chairman, Civil Aeronautics Board (1992-1996)

Paul Dominguez
Presidential Assistant for Mindanao (1992-1997)

Francisco Licuanan
Chairman, Manindigan!

Walter Sultan
Chief Convenor
WOW Tourism Volunteers Foundation, Inc.

Rodolfo Severino
Former ASEAN Secretary General (1998-2002)
Undersecretary of Foreign Affairs (1992-1997)

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Dean, Center for Development Management,
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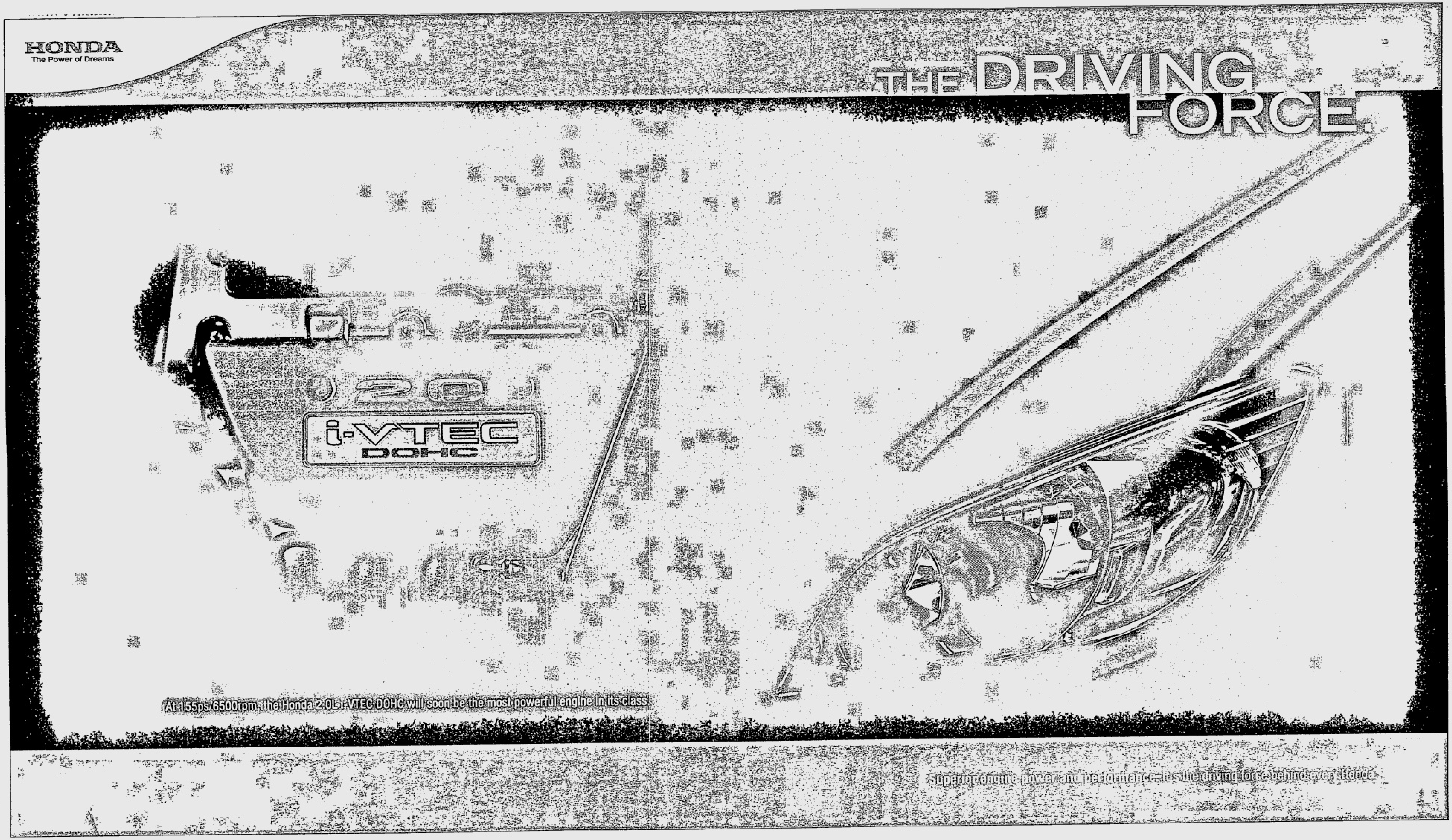
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Application deadline: 2 April 2004.

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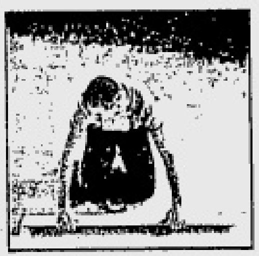

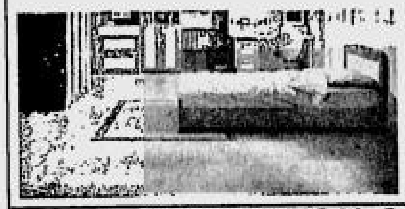

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By Blanche S. Rivera

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Paracetamol tab 500 mg	✓	0.75	2.45	1.70/tab
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Amoxicillin cap. 500 mg	✓	3.70	15.75	12.05/cap
Amoxicillin drops 125 mg/1.25 ml/10 ml	✓	37.00	80.75	43.75/bot
Amoxicillin susp. 250 mg/5 ml, 60 ml	✓	49.00	144.00	95.00/bot
Chloramphenicol cap. 500 mg	✓	3.40	37.75	34.35/cap
Chloramphenicol susp. 125 mg/5 ml 60 ml	✓	41.40	394.75	353.35/bot
Co-trimoxazole tab (TM-160mg SMZ-800mg)	✓	2.30	26.00	23.70/tab
Co-trimoxazole cap. (TM-80mg SMZ-400mg)	✓	2.60	14.80	12.20/cap
Co-trimoxazole susp. (TM-40mg SMZ-200mg)	✓	25.00	115.75	90.75/bot
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Bromhexine HCL syrup 4 mg/5 ml, 60 ml	✓	26.70	74.75	48.05/bot
Carbocisteine cap. 500 mg	✓	2.40	12.25	9.85/cap
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FPJ shuns Left; Left shuns GMA

By Norman Bordadora

POE

"DA King" turns choosy with his subjects.

Fernando Poe Jr. is reportedly giving his attention to groups that have already decided to support him over organizations who first want to consult him on issues before they make up their mind, the youth party-list group Anak ng Bayan said yesterday.

Melona Daclan, chairperson for Metro Manila of Anak ng Bayan, was told by actor Rez Cortez, head of Poe's national coordinating center for volunteers, that Da King won't be able to attend the youth party's regional convention in Manila on Thursday.

"He (Cortez) apologized and told us that FPJ's schedule is quite hectic and they are giving priority to groups that have already expressed their intention to support his presidential bid," Daclan told the INQUIRER.

Anak ng Bayan still wants to know FPJ's program for the Filipino youth. "We want to hear it straight from him," Daclan added.

Anak Bayan is not the only one ignored. Poe has snubbed the party-list conventions of leftist party-list groups as Bayan Muna, Anakpawis, Gabriela and the overseas Filipino worker group Migrante Political Party.

In contrast, the women's party Gabriela has refused to invite President Macapagal-Arroyo to the proclamation of their party-list nominees on Saturday.

"Ms Macapagal may be the only rose among the thorns in the line up of presidential candidates, but for us, this rose has been a thorn in our throats, causing much discomfort, poverty and violence," said Gabriela party president and first nominee Liza Maza.

Ms Macapagal has been a dismal failure in terms of addressing the problems of women, Maza said.

Sen. Panfilo Lacson, notorious for human rights violations, has not been invited either. Gabriela said it has extended invitations to presidential aspirants Fernando Poe Jr., Raul Roco and Eddie Villanueva.

'Revenge' of the Japanese

By Dona Z. Pazzibugan

IN THE movies, Fernando Poe Jr. killed lots of Japanese.

Now it's the Japanese turn to ice Da King— in a survey of dubious origins.

An unheard of, but apparently well-funded group claiming to be a Japanese NGO conducted a nationwide survey where—surprise-surprise—President Macapagal-Arroyo edged out actor Fernando Poe Jr. by a slim margin.

The INQUIRER asked, but neither the Japanese Embassy nor the Japanese local media bureaus has heard of the NGO, Japan Research Center. Marvin Dandan, who claimed to be its project manager, called a presscon yesterday at the posh Edsa Shangri-La Hotel in Mandaluyong. He said their research director, a certain Dr. Ishikagi Masaki Kawai, could not make it due to a "business meeting."

Several local media groups were invited, but not the Japanese media bureaus based here. Nevertheless, a handful of Japanese journalists heard about the presscon and showed up to take down the numbers.

Dandan said their nationwide survey showed that Ms Macapagal garnered 30 per cent of the votes while Poe scored only 26 per cent.

Former senator Raul Roco got 22 per cent while Sen. Panfilo Lacson and evangelist Eddie Villanueva trailed behind with 14 and 5 per cent, respectively.

The survey also showed that Ms Macapagal's running mate Sen. Noli De Castro was a "sure winner" and cornered 54 per cent of the votes, while Poe's running mate Sen. Loren Legarda fetched only 33 per cent.

Roco's running mate ex-Rep. Hermie Aquino lagged with 11 per cent.

The survey reportedly had 1,500 respondents with a margin of error of plus or minus three.

Dandan said that "Japanese investors requested" the survey "to help Filipinos."

Asked about the credentials of their NGO, Dandan became vague and said they were an independent group based in Osaka, Japan. At first, he refused to reveal their local address here. Eventually, he said they are located on the 9th floor of Legaspi Towers 3000 in Pasay.

Dandan claimed their survey reflects that "Filipinos no longer buy the idea of another movie icon." This was followed by a lengthy explanation of why Filipinos prefer Ms Macapagal over Poe.

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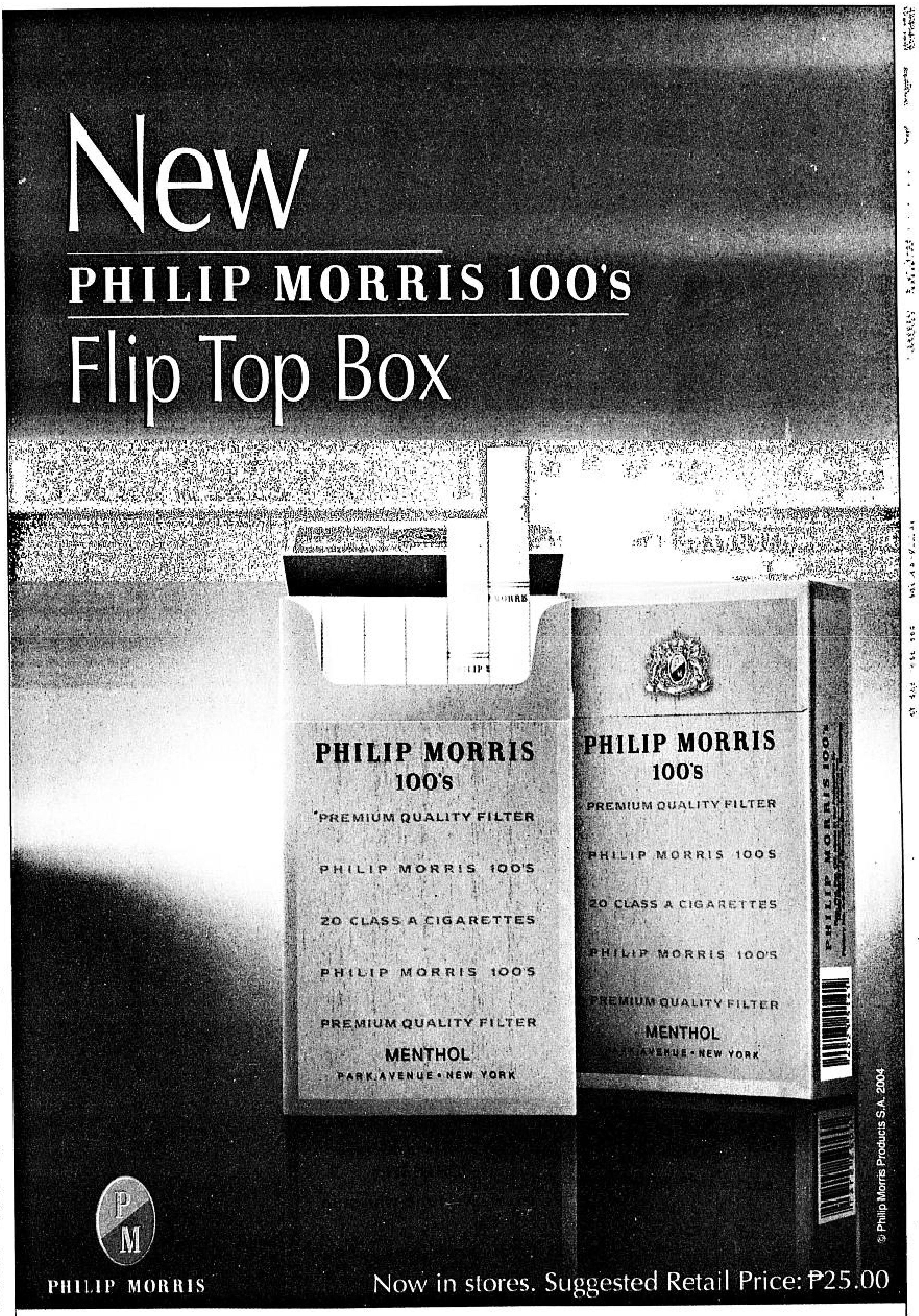

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FPJ shuns Left; Left shuns GMA

By Norman Bordadora

POE

"DA King" turns choosy with his subjects.

Fernando Poe Jr. is reportedly giving his attention to groups that have already decided to support him over organizations who first want to consult him on issues before they make up their mind, the youth party-list group Anak ng Bayan said yesterday.

Melona Daclan, chairperson for Metro Manila of Anak ng Bayan, was told by actor Rez Cortez, head of Poe's national coordinating center for volunteers, that Da King won't be able to attend the youth party's regional convention in Manila on Thursday.

"He (Cortez) apologized and told us that FPJ's schedule is quite hectic and they are giving priority to groups that have already expressed their intention to support his presidential bid," Daclan told the INQUIRER.

Anak ng Bayan still wants to know FPJ's program for the Filipino youth. "We want to hear it straight from him," Daclan added.

Anak Bayan is not the only one ignored. Poe has snubbed the party-list conventions of leftist party-list groups as Bayan Muna, Anakpawis, Gabriela and the overseas Filipino worker group Migrante Political Party.

In contrast, the women's party Gabriela has refused to invite President Macapagal-Arroyo to the proclamation of their party-list nominees on Saturday.

"Ms Macapagal may be the only rose among the thorns in the line up of presidential candidates, but for us, this rose has been a thorn in our throats, causing much discomfort, poverty and violence," said Gabriela party president and first nominee Liza Maza.

Ms Macapagal has been a dismal failure in terms of addressing the problems of women, Maza said.

Sen. Panfilo Lacson, notorious for human rights violations, has not been invited either. Gabriela said it has extended invitations to presidential aspirants Fernando Poe Jr., Raul Roco and Eddie Villanueva.

'Revenge' of the Japanese

By Dona Z. Pazzibugan

IN THE movies, Fernando Poe Jr. killed lots of Japanese.

Now it's the Japanese turn to ice Da King— in a survey of dubious origins.

An unheard of, but apparently well-funded group claiming to be a Japanese NGO conducted a nationwide survey where—surprise-surprise—President Macapagal-Arroyo edged out actor Fernando Poe Jr. by a slim margin.

The INQUIRER asked, but neither the Japanese Embassy nor the Japanese local media bureaus has heard of the NGO, Japan Research Center. Marvin Dandan, who claimed to be its project manager, called a presscon yesterday at the posh Edsa Shangri-La Hotel in Mandaluyong. He said their research director, a certain Dr. Ishikagi Masaki Kawai, could not make it due to a "business meeting."

Several local media groups were invited, but not the Japanese media bureaus based here. Nevertheless, a handful of Japanese journalists heard about the presscon and showed up to take down the numbers.

Dandan said their nationwide survey showed that Ms Macapagal garnered 30 per cent of the votes while Poe scored only 26 per cent.

Former senator Raul Roco got 22 per cent while Sen. Panfilo Lacson and evangelist Eddie Villanueva trailed behind with 14 and 5 per cent, respectively.

The survey also showed that Ms Macapagal's running mate Sen. Noli De Castro was a "sure winner" and cornered 54 per cent of the votes, while Poe's running mate Sen. Loren Legarda fetched only 33 per cent.

Roco's running mate ex-Rep. Hermie Aquino lagged with 11 per cent.

The survey reportedly had 1,500 respondents with a margin of error of plus or minus three.

Dandan said that "Japanese investors requested" the survey "to help Filipinos."

Asked about the credentials of their NGO, Dandan became vague and said they were an independent group based in Osaka, Japan. At first, he refused to reveal their local address here. Eventually, he said they are located on the 9th floor of Legaspi Towers 3000 in Pasay.

Dandan claimed their survey reflects that "Filipinos no longer buy the idea of another movie icon." This was followed by a lengthy explanation of why Filipinos prefer Ms Macapagal over Poe.

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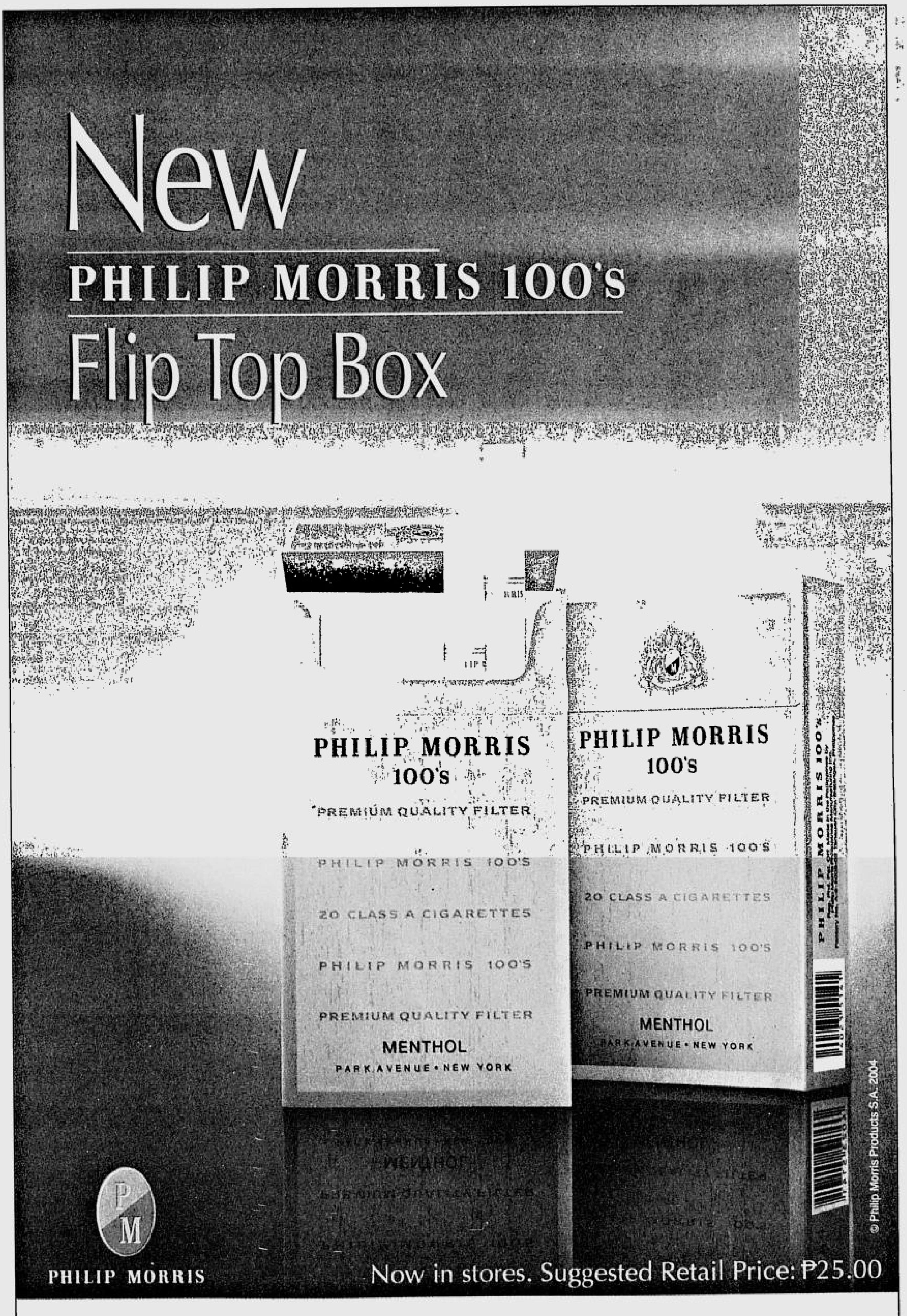

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3RD ROUND IN 5 WEEKS

Caltex, Total, Seaoil follow the leaders, hike prices

By Ronnel W. Domingo

THREE more oil firms jacked up prices of gasoline, diesel and kerosene starting midnight last night, nearly completing the third round of price hikes in five weeks, and with companies hinting of another round within the month.

Caltex Philippines Inc., Total Philippines Corp. and Seaoil Philippines Corp. increased their gasoline prices by 60. centavos per liter, diesel and kerosene by 30 centavos.

On Monday at 6 a.m., Flying V hiked its prices per liter by 80 centavos for gasoline, 53 centavos for diesel; and Eastern Petroleum Corp. by 80 centavos for gasoline, 50 centavos for diesel.

Midnight of the same day, Pilipinas Shell Petroleum Corp. raised gasoline prices by 60 centavos per liter, diesel and kerosene by 30 centavos. Petron Corp. is expected to follow suit soon.

Since the start of the year, gasoline prices have gone up by a total of P1.20 per liter, diesel and kerosene prices by P1.10.

Yesterday, Flying V announced that it reduced pump rates by 20 centavos for both gasoline and diesel products, to match those of other firms. Eastern did the same, reducing gasoline prices by 20 centavos and diesel by 15 centavos.

"Our dealers will lose their market if we do not make these revisions," Fernando Martinez, Eastern chair, admitted.

Also yesterday, Caltex and Total said they were increasing prices of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) by 75 centavos per kilogram, or P8.25 per 11-kg cylinder.

This puts the retail price of Caltex's 11-kg LPG cylinder in the P310-P342 range, depending on the trading area or place of purchase, and TotalGaz in the P305-P338 range.

The two companies followed the lead of Pilipinas Shell Petroleum Corp., whose Shellane now sells in the P308-P341 range.

Officials of the oil companies said the increases were the result of the continuing uptrend in international prices.

Martinez said the actual rise in fuel product costs translated to P1.50 per liter, thus the possibility of another round of price hikes in the next few weeks.

Data from the Department of Energy show that the Mean of Platts Singapore—benchmark for prices of finished products in the region—rates for gasoline went up by $5.68 to $44.25 per barrel in January, from $39.53 in December.

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Another tax scam case filed vs Chingkoes

By Clarissa S. Batino

A PRESIDENTIAL task force filed on Friday before the Ombudsman criminal charges against officials of Express Color Industries Inc., one of the companies owned by tax scam suspects Faustino and Gloria Chingkoe, as well as finance officials and employees who conspired with the couple in defrauding the government.

Finance Undersecretary Inocencio Ferrer Jr., vice chair of the Special Presidential Task Force 156, said Express Color was found to have obtained eight spurious tax credit certificates amounting to P46.9 million.

The company allegedly sold the fake tax credit certificates to Petron Corp., Pilipinas Shell, Moldex Products Inc., Steniel Packaging and Steel Asia which in turn used them to pay their tax obligations.

The Task Force earlier filed cases against four Chingkoe companies before the Ombudsman. But of the cases filed, only the case against Diamond Knitting had been filed before the Sandiganbayan.

Connivance

Ferrer said the Task Force would complete the filing of cases against the 11 Chingkoe companies before Executive Order 233 that gives the group the mandate would expire in October 2004.

About P2.3 billion worth of fraudulent tax credit certificates were found to have been issued to 11 Chingkoe companies from 1994 to 1998 in connivance with finance officials.

The Chingkoes later sold the spurious tax credit certificates, of which about half went to Petron and Shell.

"We may have all the evidence we need in the 11 cases but we have to verify each of the evidence separately. The Task Force has a set of lawyers assigned to each case and they are the ones who check whether the evidence is authentic or not," said Ferrer.

Ferrer yesterday refuted allegations made by Felix Chingkoe, a key witness to the P2.3-billion tax credit scam perpetrated by the Chingkoe couple, that he slowed down the investigation and prosecution of the 11 Chingkoe companies involved in the tax scam.

The Firm

Ferrer was a former senior partner at the influential Cruz and Villaraza Law Offices before he was appointed finance undersecretary in April 2002. He heads Task Force 156, the DOF-led group tasked to investigate and file cases against perpetrators of the tax credit scam that also involved 17 former officials and employees of the Department of Finance.

Felix said the Task Force had already spent P56 million but had not prosecuted anybody in relation to the tax scam. He said even the extradition case against Gloria Chingkoe had not progressed while his brother Faustino was being allowed to freely travel in and out of the country on a P45,000 bail.

He said upon the instructions of Ferrer, Felix completed in August 2002 the so-called affidavit of intervention, a 260-page report with 4,000 pages of documents, testimonies and evidence that should fast-track the investigation and the filing of lawsuits against the 11 companies.

According to Ferrer, the Task Force valued the assistance of Felix in building up the case against Faustino and Gloria, adding that he does not want to pick a fight with Felix.

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Rich victims of Marcos may get payment first

By Dona Z. Pazzibugan

BIG businesses taken over by the late dictator Ferdinand Marcos will get priority in the proposed $200-million compensation fund for martial law victims, the chair of Selda, a group of victims of torture, summary execution and involuntary disappearance, warned yesterday.

Dan Vizmanos said that while Senate Bill No. 1877 and House Bill No. 4535 sought to compensate the victims with part of the recovered $684 million in Marcos ill-gotten wealth, the latest version of the bills now included "illegal takeover of business" and "involuntary exile" in the list of compensable human rights abuses.

This constitutes discrimination against the majority of the victims who are poor, Vizmanos said. He said it was already bad enough that legislators had been dragging their feet in passing the law.

"The bill clearly favors the economic elite. We see the hand of the Marcoses and the economic vested interests behind this," Vizmanos said at a news conference.

He said that unlike most victims of torture and summary execution, business groups like the Lopez family had already recovered what Marcos and his cronies took from them.

The Lopezes lost the Manila Electric Co., ABS-CBN and other businesses during martial law. Many family members were forced to flee to the United States during the dictatorship.

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She said that the amendments were made only in the latter part of January, and that it was Makati Rep. Teodoro Locsin Jr. who introduced the amendments to the House bill.

Leave money untouched

The congressman's father, Teodoro Locsin Sr., owned the weekly magazine Philippines Free Press, which was among the publications that Marcos ordered closed at the imposition of martial law in September 1972.

Enriquez acknowledged that big business groups had the right to seek damages from the Marcoses. But she said their cases should be separate from those of victims of human rights abuse.

"This [proposed law] is more favorable to the Marcoses than to the victims," she said.

Enriquez also said Selda members preferred that the compensation law not be passed in the meantime.

"Leaving the money untouched is a better option for us right now," she said.

Congress is scheduled to adjourn on Feb. 6. The other day, Enriquez said Congress still had time to pass the law if the legislators were pressured enough.

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Symbol of RP . . .

From page A1

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Attractive investment

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Mittal also echoed the confidence of NSC investors that it would now be secured from cheap Russian steel products.

The flooding of Russian steel in the market was one of the main reasons for the NSC's bankruptcy in 1999.

Brighter outlook

Local officials said the NSC's reopening meant a brighter economic outlook for the city.

"This revival would resuscitate the ailing economy of Iligan," Vice Mayor Lawrence Lluch Cruz said.

Alejandra Bautista, 45, could not hide her joy as she took her seat yesterday inside the administration building 2 of the NSC complex.

Like thousands of Iliganons, Bautista, who served as former production controller in the steel firm before it closed down in 1999, was ecstatic at NSC's formal reopening.

"I am so happy because now we have a job (again). Before, I was able to send my children to a private school but after NSC closed down, we suffered the worst living conditions," said Bautista, who along with some 200 employees would start working on a rotation basis. *With reports from Jeffrey P. Maningo and Aisha Echavez, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

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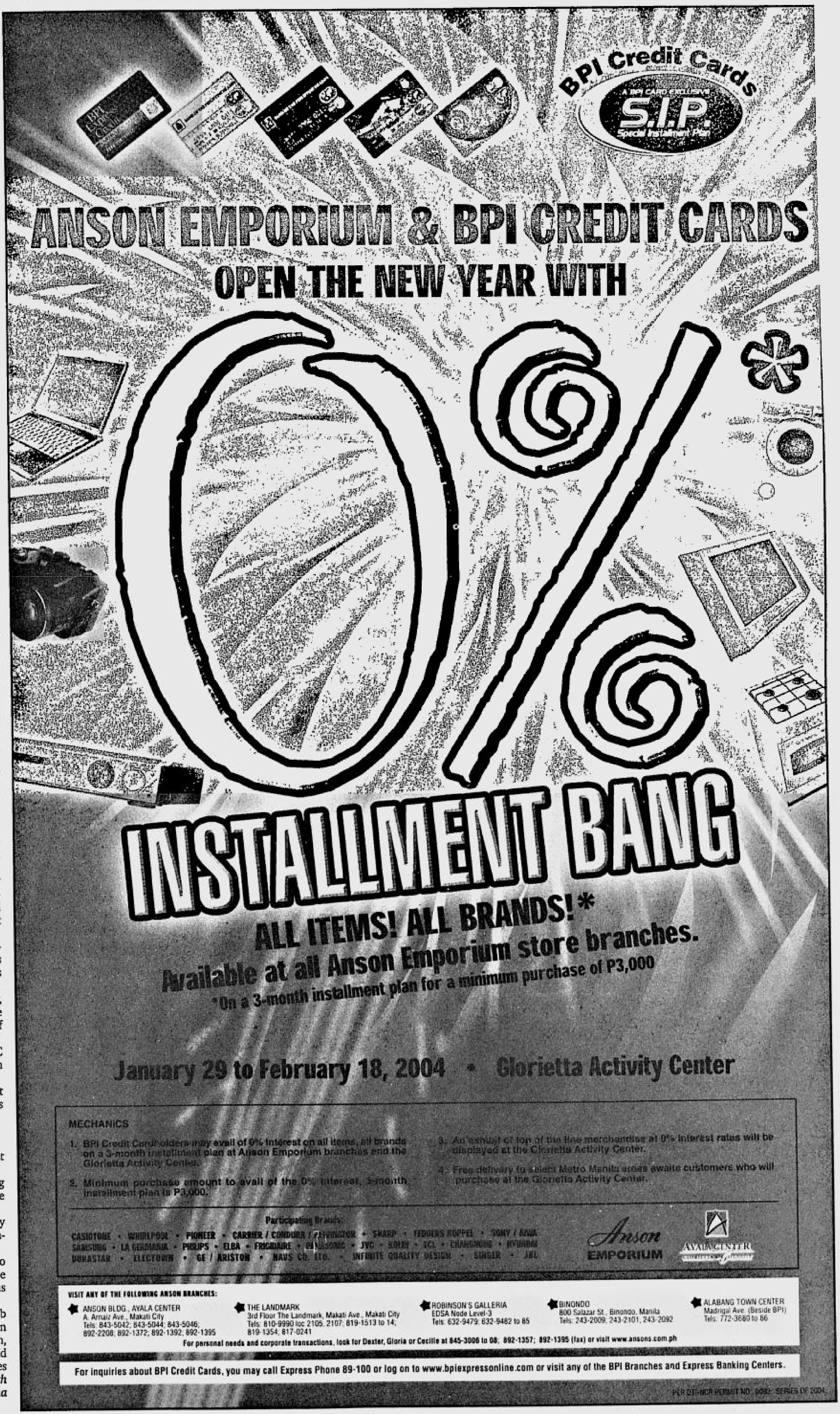
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Local officials said the NSC's reopening meant a brighter economic outlook for the city.

"This revival would resuscitate the ailing economy of Iligan," Vice Mayor Lawrence Lluch Cruz said.

Alejandra Bautista, 45, could not hide her joy as she took her seat yesterday inside the administration building 2 of the NSC complex.

Like thousands of Iliganons, Bautista, who served as former production controller in the steel firm before it closed down in 1999, was ecstatic at NSC's formal reopening.

"I am so happy because now we have a job (again). Before, I was able to send my children to a private school but after NSC closed down, we suffered the worst living conditions," said Bautista, who along with some 200 employees would start working on a rotation basis. *With reports from Jeffrey P. Maningo and Aisha Echavez, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

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Sharon to rid Gaza Strip of Jewish settlements

JERUSALEM—Israel would need one to two years to remove 17 Jewish settlements in the Gaza Strip, Prime Minister Ariel Sharon said in remarks published Tuesday, elaborating on evacuation plans first revealed a day earlier.

Sharon also said he would seek US approval and possibly financial aid for relocating about 7,500 Gaza settlers to Israel. He said he plans to remove what he called three "problematic" settlements in the West Bank.

Speaking to the Haaretz daily, the prime minister acknowledged that Israel might have difficulty justifying a request for aid, but said that in the end it would be in Washington's interest to help with the dismantling of settlements.

"They (the Americans) were opposed to the establishment of settlements," Sharon said. "Now they can say, 'we warned you,' but the Americans rely on us in the region and what will develop here as part of the president's vision."

Sharon was referring to the US-backed "road map" peace plan, whose centerpiece is the creation of a Palestinian state alongside Israel by 2005.

Haaretz first reported Monday on Sharon's plans to remove Gaza settlements, running excerpts from the interview. Sharon then confirmed the plan in a meeting with stunned legislators from his Likud Party.

Sharon's statements were met by confusion and skepticism, while settlers and their political allies threatened to bring down the government. Sharon's critics dismissed his remarks as a public relations ploy, possibly meant to deflect from his growing legal troubles in a widening corruption probe.

Sharon has said repeatedly in recent weeks that he plans to take unilateral steps in the West Bank and Gaza—dismantling some settlements, redeploying troops and imposing a boundary—if there is no progress on stalled road map.

However, the Gaza plan was the most detailed indication yet of Sharon's idea for unilateral action if peace talks with the Palestinians remain frozen.

Sharon's closest ally, Vice Premier Ehud Olmert, said Tuesday that the prime minister is serious, and that implementation could begin by the summer. Sharon told Haaretz the removal of settlements could take one to two years.

Sharon vowed Tuesday to form a new Israeli government if his coalition partners try to block his plan to evacuate almost all the Jewish settlements in the Gaza Strip.

Sharon's comments to Yedioth Ahronoth newspaper followed his announcement published on Monday of a settlement evacuation strategy, after which he won a confidence vote in parliament by a single vote when hard-right allies staged a walkout.

"I will not hesitate to set up another government," he told Israel's largest daily. "Not that I am rushing to take such a step, but I have no intention of being at the mercy of factions... that won't permit me to handle matters of state."

A Cabinet minister from the rightist National Religious Party responded to the plan on Tuesday with a threat to resign.

"We won't participate in this," Housing Minister Effi Eitam told Israel Radio, speaking about Sharon's plan to evict Gaza settlers.

AP, Reuters

IT'S *DELICADEZA*, MR. BERTIE LIM

The full page advertisement in your defense, Mr. Alberto Lim, misses the point on why we are clamoring for your resignation. The signatories of the ad perhaps didn't know that you were one of the founders and vice-chairman of the Freedom to Fly Coalition (FFC). In the Senate investigation on the USAID-funded AGILE (Accelerating Growth, Investment and Liberalization with Equity) a few months back, Ms. Mila Abad, FFC president, admitted to senators in the presence of Ms. Narzalina Lim, another FFC founder, that FFC got funding from AGILE to push pro-US aviation policies. Documents unearthed by the senators also specifically mentioned FFC's role as a lobbyist for US aviation interests in the country. For *delicadeza*, Mr. Lim, we have expected you to resign after your group has been unmasked as a lobbyist for foreign aviation interests. But you didn't. It is not our fault if you are being suspected as a mole of FFC in the Civil Aeronautics Board (CAB).

The signatories of the ad didn't also know that you, Mr. Lim, were exposed by members of the Palawan Tourism Council for getting their signatures and using these as an excuse to open up flights to and from South Korea despite the absence of demand on the route. They may not be aware of the destructive and ruinous effect of your move, Mr. Lim, because they are not from the aviation industry. But for us, it will mean a weakened airline industry because we would give these Korean carriers extra seats to fill up with illegal Fifth Freedom traffic.

If the signatories of the ad still do not know, Mr. Lim was recommended to the CAB Board by Mr. Victor Limlingan, a former CAB member who had a case with the Ombudsman and was convicted and banned by the anti-graft court from holding any public post. Mr. Limlingan is himself a ranking member of the FFC. Mr. Lim was endorsed to the post by Ms. Vicky Garchitorena, a member of the Selection Committee in Malacanang. Could you blame us for questioning Mr. Lim's loyalty in the face of this incontrovertible fact?

If not for his other agenda, why is Mr. Lim holding on to his position which earns him only P500 a month as allowance during CAB's board meeting?

We are not alone in the clamor for Mr. Lim's resignation. There are the airline workers and labor groups like the National Labor Union, National Federation of Labor Unions, Association of Democratic Labor Organizations, Alyansa ng Malayang Obrero, Philippine Airlines Employees Association, Automotive Industry Workers Alliance, Solidarity of Independent General Labor Organizations, Confederation of Filipino Workers, Philippine Congress of Employees, Association of Democratic and Free Labor Organization and Katipunan ng mga Anak ng Bayan.

Even senators from both the administration and opposition have called on Mr. Lim to step down. Up to now, the budget of the CAB for 2004 has not been approved by the Senate unless Mr. Lim resigns. The senators are more concerned than us because it is in their turf that they first heard about FFC's involvement in AGILE, an open skies advocate. Could we be more discerning than the senators?

We are against Mr. Lim because he represents foreign interests in the CAB. Government officials should protect Philippine interests, not those of foreigners. We cannot allow foreign interests to prevail over Filipino interests.

We are fighting for fair skies and fair competition. We are not against open skies as long as it is true open skies that is fair and equitable. We are against monopolies. We demand reciprocity in trade agreements as a moral business practice. We cannot allow our competitors to have access to our market while we don't have access to theirs'.

Nationalists like Vice President Teofisto Guingona and the late Ka Blas Ople, the former foreign affairs secretary, had strongly supported us in our position to oppose open skies, including the executive director of CAB, Tomas Mañalac.

> **Guingona said: "Granting US air carriers unlimited access to Philippine air space, they are placed in parity with the Filipino people who have the exclusive right to the enjoyment and beneficial use of the country's natural resources . . . With the broad adverse effects of the monopoly and dominance of US air carriers on Philippine economy in general and on the operations of the Philippine carriers, the domino principle takes effect, affecting ultimately the Filipino aviation workforce who may possibly be displaced should Philippine carriers be compelled to shut down or cut back its operations due to the evil effect of US monopoly / dominance."**
>
> Ople said: "The preferred mode was to submit the 1982 open skies agreement to the Senate for concurrence . . . Open skies may have far-reaching implications for our aviation industry and could also become a magnet for political attack as open skies is being equated to a derogation of our sovereignty."
>
> **Mañalac declared: "The RP-US Air Transport Agreement does not provide for a level playing field between RP and US carriers. It imposes restrictions on the access of RP carriers (but not US carriers) to market opportunities: on rights to serve US gateways, on routing flexibility, on beyond points, and most significantly on rights to carry traffic between US points and beyond the US to other countries. In sum, RP carriers' access is effectively limited to less than 50% of the current and potential RP-US market while US carriers can access the full market."**

The issue here is choosing between Filipino or foreign interests. We appeal to President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo to step into the case and resolve the matter with the welfare of the nation taking utmost priority.

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Advt.

North Korea agrees to six-nation nuclear talks

SEOUL—North Korea said Tuesday it has agreed to six-nation talks on its nuclear weapons programs starting Feb. 25, prompting expectations that the countries will discuss Pyongyang's offer for a nuclear freeze.

The announcement was a breakthrough after months of trying to resume negotiations among the United States, China, Russia, Japan and the two Koreas. An earlier round, aimed at persuading North Korea to abandon its nuclear programs, ended in August without much progress.

"The DPRK and the US, the major parties concerned to the six-way talks, and China, the host country, agreed to resume the next round of the six-way talks from Feb. 25 after having a series of discussion," North Korea's official KCNA news agency reported.

"A discussion was made with the parties concerned in this regard," it said, without giving other details. DPRK stands for Democratic People's Republic of Korea, North Korea's official name.

China later confirmed it would host the talks, with Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zhang Qiyue saying all sides decided that conditions are right and that all should "exert sincerity and flexibility."

Washington and Pyongyang had disagreed on ground rules for resuming six-nation talks.

North Korea had insisted it needs a nuclear "deterrent" against a possible US attack. But it has said it would suspend its nuclear programs as a first step in talks if Washington lifts sanctions against the North, resumes oil shipments, and removes North Korea from its list of countries that sponsor terrorism. *AP*

WORLDBRIEFS

Indonesia confirms bird flu case

SINGAPORE—Bird flu continued its seemingly inexorable march through Asia on Tuesday, as Indonesia found a strain of the virus in its poultry flocks that can be deadly to humans and China vowed to defeat the threat. The human death toll stood at 12 after Vietnam and Thailand reported a death each from the virus. Authorities in China, hit hard last year by SARS, tightened curbs, set up telephone hot lines for suspected cases and put 3,200 farmers under observation. Indonesia confirmed it had found the H5N1 strain, the only form of the virus known to have killed humans, in poultry. "The identification process indicates the virus H5N1 in poultry... but so far there is no case among humans," Tri Satya Putri Naipospos, director of animal health at the agriculture ministry, told a new conference. *Reuters*

Australian PM doubts intel on WMDs

SYDNEY—Prime Minister John Howard acknowledged Tuesday that US and British intelligence on weapons of mass destruction, upon which his government relied to join the war against Iraq, may have been wrong. "In the fullness of time it might be demonstrated that the advice was inaccurate," Howard said. "We can't be absolutely certain (that the intelligence was wrong). Obviously the evidence is not pointing strongly in the other direction." A staunch ally of Washington, Howard has stood by British and US official assurances that there was evidence of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. On the strength of those assurances—and Australia's strategic alliance with the United States—Canberra contributed troops and military power to the allied war in Iraq. *AP*

Kerry, Edwards tangle over South Carolina

GREENVILLE, South Carolina—After back-to-back wins in Iowa and New Hampshire, Sen. John Kerry was hoping for a sweep Tuesday in the biggest test yet for Democratic presidential hopefuls, seven states holding primaries or caucuses. But the race's two Southerners—Sen. John Edwards of North Carolina and retired Army Gen. Wesley Clark of Arkansas—were angling to slow Kerry's gathering momentum toward becoming the party's nominee to challenge President George W. Bush in November. Edwards was counting on a victory in South Carolina's primary on Tuesday to keep his own campaign alive. And Clark hoped for a win in Oklahoma and a respectable showing in two western states, Arizona and New Mexico, to propel his campaign into the next round of contests. *AP*

Japanese troops depart for Iraq

TOKYO—A group of Japanese ground troops assigned to help rebuild Iraq departed for their mission from the northern island of Hokkaido Tuesday, inaugurating the main part of the highly contested operation. The soldiers left on a government plane from an army base outside Sapporo, about 830 km northwest of Tokyo, a Ground Self-Defense Force official said on condition of anonymity. Numbering about 80, the troops are part of a dispatch of about 1,000 ground, sea and air forces being sent to the region. They will first train in Kuwait before moving to the southern Iraqi city of Samawah where they will build residential quarters for some 500 ground troops expected to arrive by March. The troops will purify water and carry out other humanitarian tasks in Iraq. *AP*

Taiwan eyes demilitarized zone with China

TAIPEI—Taiwan's leader on Tuesday proposed setting up a demilitarized zone, special envoys and liaison offices with its rival, China—measures aimed at blunting criticism that he's been recklessly provoking the nearby communist giant. President Chen Shui-bian didn't give details of the proposals. But he said they could be part of a "peace and stability framework" that he hopes voters will approve in Taiwan's first island-wide referendum on March 20. Since Taiwan and China split amid civil war in 1949, leaders from both sides haven't met and their governments don't have formal relations. Beijing has repeatedly threatened war to take over the island, just 160 km off China's coast. *AP*

US Senate leader gets poison thru mail

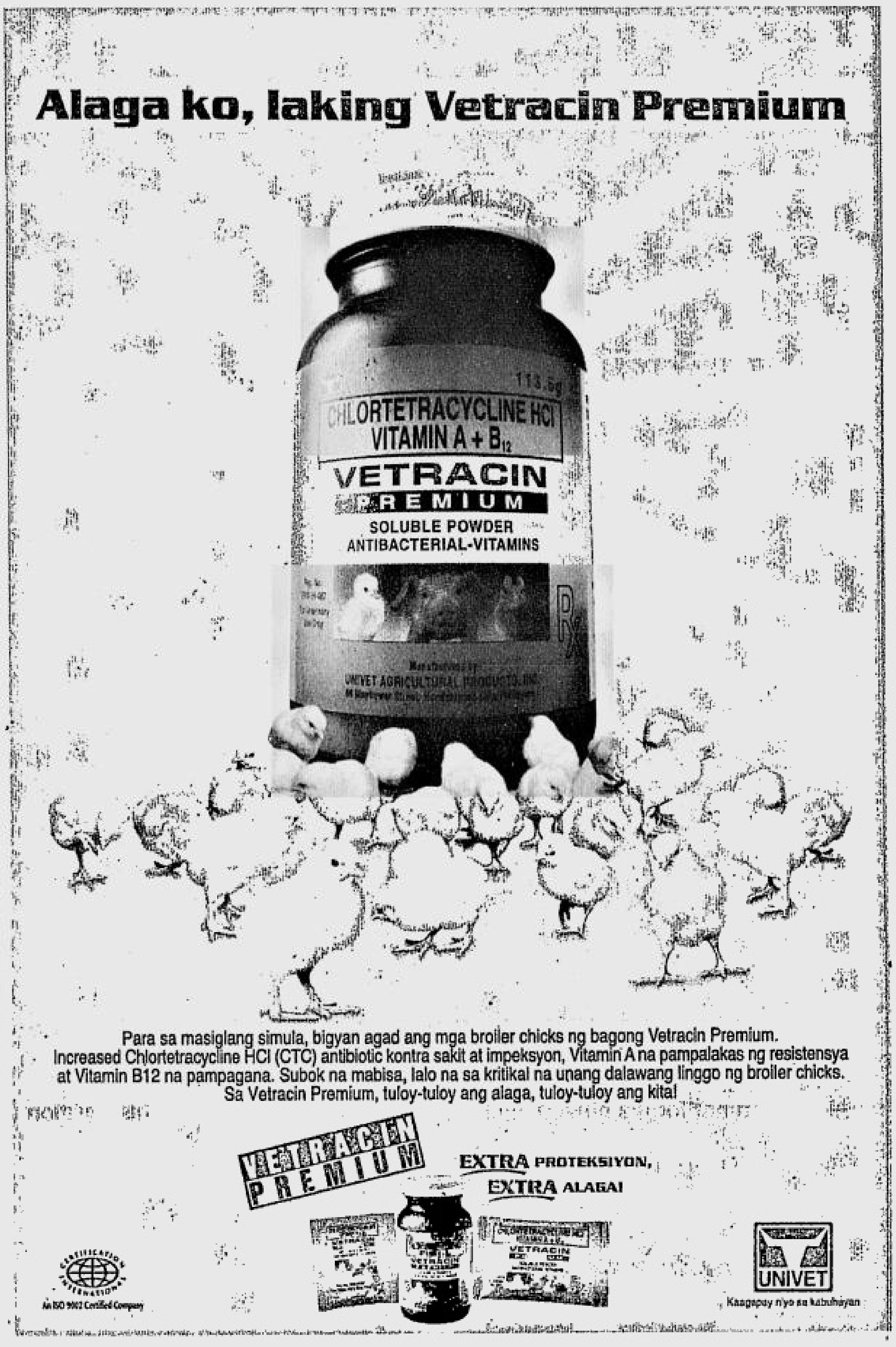
WASHINGTON — The Senate majority leader's office apparently has suffered its second bioterror attack in three years, with another suspicious white powder delivered through the mail system—this time laced with poisonous ricin, officials said.

"This is a criminal action," said Sen. Bill Frist, a Republican from Tennessee, whose staff discovered the white powder in their Dirksen Senate Office Building mailroom Monday afternoon.

Sixteen people on the floor were decontaminated, and others who might have been in the area were urged to contact Senate officials, Capitol Police Chief Terrance Gainer told reporters at a late Monday night news conference.

However, no one was expected to get sick, said Frist, who normally uses his Capitol majority leader's office instead of the Dirksen office. If symptoms of ricin poisoning have not surfaced in about eight hours, contamination is unlikely, said Frist, a surgeon before his election to the Senate.

Two out of three tests conducted on the powder indicated ricin, Gainer said. The third test came out negative, and a fourth, more definitive test was under way, with results expected Tuesday. *AP*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Building collapses in Turkey; 12 dead

KONYA, Turkey— Rescue workers used drills and their bare hands to search for survivors Tuesday, a day after the collapse of an 11-story apartment building in central Turkey that killed at least 12 people. Some 28 injured survivors were taken to hospitals.

At least 70 more people were believed to be still trapped in the rubble, said Konya Gov. Ahmet Kayhan. CNN-Turk television reported that the number could be as high as 150.

Emergency workers and some officials suggested that poor construction was to blame. The floors of the building had mostly collapsed on top of each other, leaving a pile of concrete roughly two stories high.

"I don't see much chance of life," said Hakan Korkut, an official of the private search and rescue team, AKUT. "The concrete cannot be removed intact because it crumbles."

Among the survivors pulled from the debris overnight were a mother and her two daughters. A 2-year-old girl, however, was among the dead, officials said. *AP*

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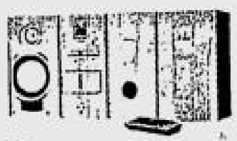

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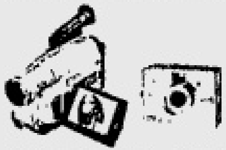

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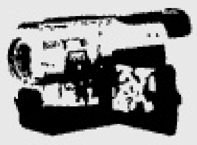

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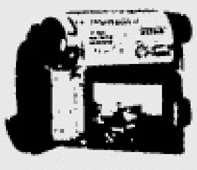

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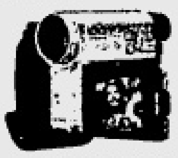

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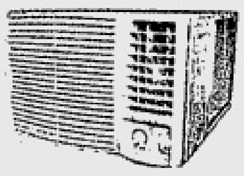

Kelvinator FCK055BP
0.50 HP manual
Before: ₱ 7,777
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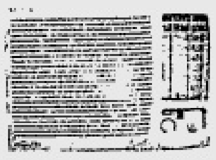

CONDURA FCC075BP
.75 HP manual
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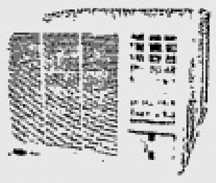
Save: ₱ 480



Carrier FCA095BP
1.0HP manual
Before: ₱ 14,350
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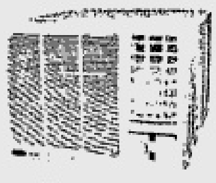
Save: ₱ 851



Carrier MCA 115PP
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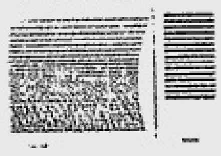

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2.0HP; 10.5 EER
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Now: ₱ 19,999
Save: ₱ 1,600

SAMSUNG MW620
0.6 cuft
easy rotary control knobs
Before: ₱ 3,499
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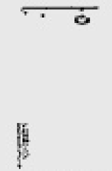
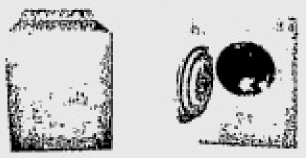


SANYO SR-507NM
5.0 cuft ; manual defrost
Before: ₱ 7,799
Now: ₱ 7,595
Save: ₱ 204



White-Westinghouse WD500 +1050TA
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Stalemate

EDITORIAL

THE CHOICE was between dream and reality, says Camarines Sur Rep. Rolando Andaya, chair of the appropriations committee, and the House of Representatives chose reality.

Now, many people wonder if they themselves are dreaming. For how could anyone believe that House members would someday be preaching fiscal prudence and actually trying to force the national government to curtail its spending? After all, Congress has developed the habit of passing every appropriations measure sent by Malacañang with the total amount untouched. And if changes were made, these were done mainly to increase the pork-barrel allocations of lawmakers.

But there it is. For the first time, the House majority is not only calling for restraint in government spending but actually fighting to cut the budget proposed by Malacañang by as much as P53 billion. And House members want to do this through the simple expedient of passing the same budget as the one Congress approved for 2003.

Malacañang asked Congress for P862.6 billion this year, more than 6 percent over the 2003 budget of P804 billion. By reenacting the 2003 budget and passing a supplemental budget of P5.3 billion to cover earlier legislated increases in the salaries of members of the Armed Forces, the House hopes to keep the deficit down to P195 billion. "Good governance dictates that we live within our means and not foist a budget that cannot be sustained," said Speaker Jose de Venecia. He warned that a "full-blown fiscal crisis" could develop unless a drastic reduction is made on the expenditure program of the government.

There can be no arguing against austerity at this time when the budget deficit threatens to spin out of control and drag the entire economy down. The congressmen are right when they insist on cutting the budget to the bone. With the failure of Congress to pass new revenue measures, the deficit cannot be held down to what the budget planners originally projected. But then, why did the House pass the P862.6-billion appropriations bill in the first place? (The bill was approved on third reading on Dec. 18, 2003.)

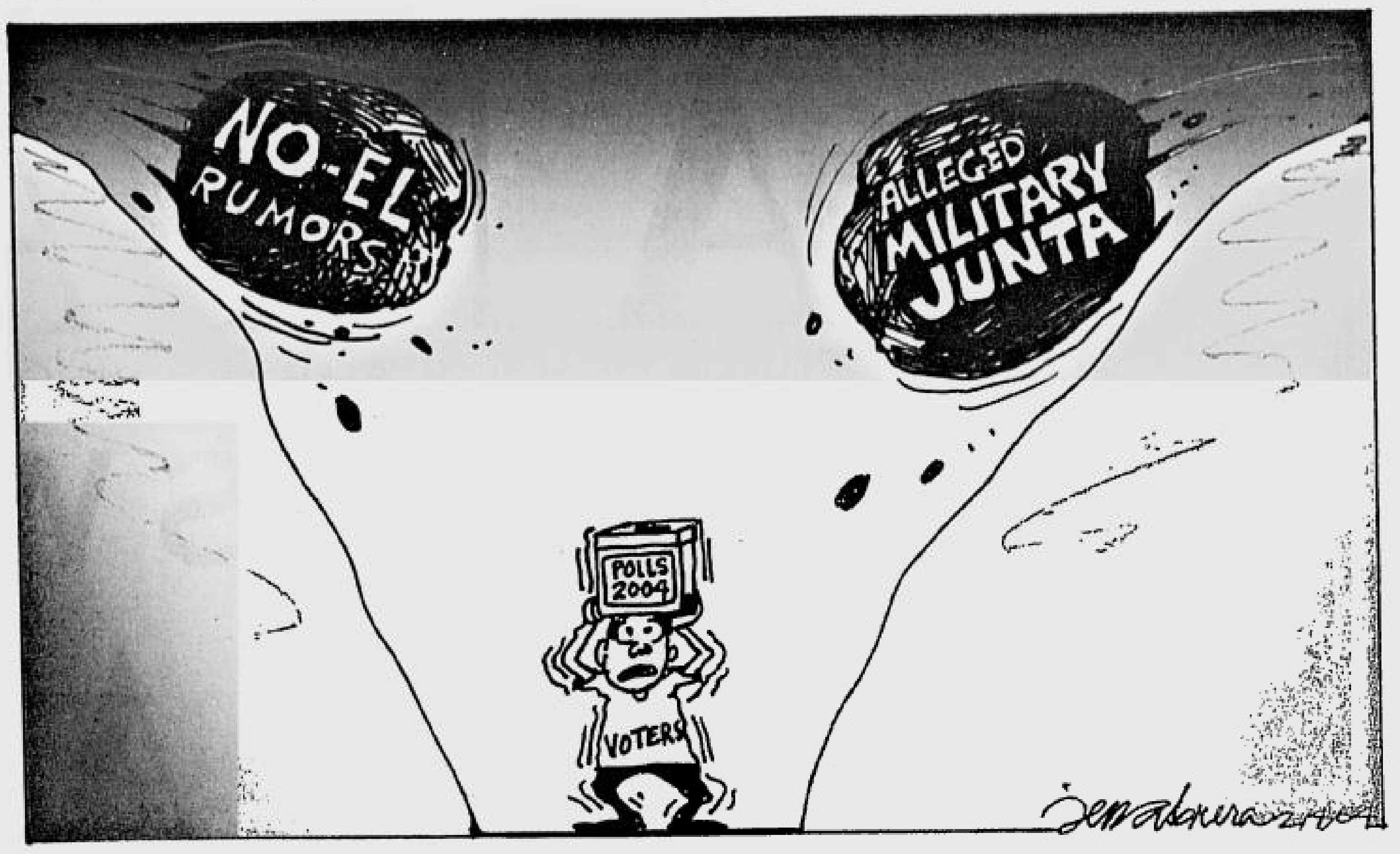
That is the question senators are asking, and many smell politics behind the sudden turnaround of the House majority. To Sen. Manuel Villar, a member of the pro-administration Senate majority coalition, the reenactment of the 2003 budget would give President Macapagal-Arroyo "greater flexibility" in the disbursement of funds, putting her at a great advantage during the May elections. House Minority Leader Carlos Padilla charged that adopting the 2003 budget would put at the President's discretion the P72-billion allocation for capital expenditures plus the pork barrel of lawmakers. "This means congressmen and senators will be flocking to her office and lining up for the release of their pork barrel," Padilla added.

Pork is what the senators are fighting for, De Venecia said. It is the senators' "consuming desire to protect their huge pork barrel amounting to P200 million each" that moves them to fight for the passage of the bigger budget, he said.

That sounds like another case of the pot calling the kettle black. Although senators get a bigger pork, congressmen also get to partake of the feast, getting about P70 million last year. And that amount is bigger by P5 million than what they would get if the new budget bill would be passed, according to Sen. Joker Arroyo. Which is the reason they want to reenact the old budget.

Filipinos can believe all that, knowing how generous to themselves their lawmakers can be. If only to prove that they really want to cut the deficit, why don't the congressmen give up their pork and challenge the senators to do the same? It would cut the budget by about P20 billion right off. From there, the conference committee can proceed to lop off other unnecessary expenditures or take out projects that are not urgent. Then they can pass a new budget and dispel suspicions that the administration is planning to raid the treasury to ensure the President's victory.

The problem is, they may have run out of time. Congress has only two days left before it goes on a long recess. And with all the animosity between them, congressmen and senators can hardly be expected to even make an attempt to hammer out a compromise measure. For good or for evil, it seems that the government is stuck with the old budget.



Chicken is safe to eat but…

As I See It

Neal H. Cruz

THE SIGHT of Secretaries Manuel Dayrit of Health and Cito Lorenzo of Agriculture eating fried chicken despite the bird flu panic reminds me of Sen. Ramon Revilla and Cavite officials bravely eating *tahong* at the height of the red tide scare. Dayrit and Lorenzo had their chicken-eating adventure splashed in the newspapers and on television to prove that they are not chicken but are brave enough to eat chicken; bird flu or not; Revilla, et al. ate their *tahong* to prove that it was safe to eat even with red tide warnings.

Revilla was helping the shellfish farmers while Dayrit and Lorenzo are now helping the chicken growers and traders. For the sale of chicken has dropped 30 percent since the avian flu outbreak.

Chicken is really safe to eat even with bird flu rampaging in Asian poultry farms as long as you cook it well. The bird flu virus is killed by cooking. Frozen dressed chicken is also safe. What is not safe are the live chickens sold in the wet markets. These the Filipinos prefer, thinking live chickens are assured of freshness. The virus is spread from chicken to chicken and from chicken to human but not from human to human, according to doctors (but some doctors believe otherwise). Infection is passed through the secretions and feces of chicken. So housewives who go to the poultry section of wet markets are at risk. So are the *sabungeros* who handle fighting cocks most of the day. The most at risk are of course the workers in the poultry farms.

But what many people don't realize is that eggs also pose a danger, not the contents but the shell. Since the egg passes through the hen's anus, it could be contaminated. Indeed, you can sometimes see eggs stained with feces. So wash your hands well after handling eggs.

Actually, more danger comes from cholesterol than from bird flu when you eat fried chicken in fast food chains. The white meat of chicken has little fat and cholesterol but the skin has plenty of them. But crispy fried chicken is now all the rage. And you cannot have crispy chicken without the skin. Besides, the chicken in the fast food chains is sometimes fried in beef fat, which is rich in cholesterol. Furthermore, the French fries are usually fried also in beef fat. Worse, the fries absorb plenty of fat although you don't see it. Fries are loaded with calories and are fattening. Obesity increases your risk of high blood pressure, heart disease and diabetes.

Doctors have noted that more and more Filipino children and young adults are now overweight in proportion to the increase in fast food outlets. Also, the incidence of hypertension, heart disease and diabetes in the Philippines have increased. The reason: more and more Filipinos are now eating hamburgers and French fries. In America, home of the hamburger and fry, obesity and the above diseases are epidemic.

In fact, a group of obese Americans are now suing fast food chains for damages because, they charged, their hamburgers and fries did not have warnings that they are fattening. If this group has its way, your Big Mac may soon have this warning: "This hamburger may be hazardous to your health," like the warnings on the cigarette packs.

Proof that the American diet is hazardous to the health is this: The incidence of heart disease among the Japanese is very low because they have a healthy diet, mostly fish and vegetables. But when they migrate to the US, heart disease increases among them. The cause: the American diet—the steaks, gravies, bacon, ham, eggs and most likely the hamburgers and French fries.

The hamburger is about the worst type of meat you can eat. Why? Because it is made up of meat not good enough for steaks, briskets, and other cuts. They are the leftover meat, plus the fat and ligaments. That is why they are ground so you can't see their original form. That is why hamburgers are cheap. They are the cheapest you can find. The same is true with the *longganisa* and the sausages. And the canned liver spread and potted meat.

Why do the food processors do this? Because beef is bought by weight. When cattle are bought on the hoof, their weight includes the innards, bones, blood, hide, hair, horns, teeth. That is why cattle from the range are first fattened in the feed lots before they are sold to the meat processors—to increase their weight. The profit of the feed lot traders comes from the difference in the cattle's weight when brought in from the range and the weight after they are fattened and sold. Most of the gain in weight is fat. So every part of the animal must be sold; every pound of it not sold is money lost. The parts not fit for human consumption are made into pet food. The bones are ground into bone meal. Even the hooves and horns are turned into chew toys for dogs.

More and more Filipinos now flock to fast food chains to eat hamburgers, fries and crispy chickens because they are inexpensive. Besides, they find them tasty. That's because of the fat. It is the fat that makes them delicious. Remove the pork fat from the *adobo* and it won't be as delicious.

But fast food is wreaking havoc on the health of our children and teeners. Fat children look cute and healthy, but that extra fat is very hard to shed. The fat child usually carries that extra fat to adulthood. All that extra fat is bad for the heart.

So take this advice: Tell your children to take it easy on those Big Macs.

Fools rush in

There's the Rub

Conrado de Quiros

"I'LL tell you what's going to happen in the next 18 years in this country," a friend of mine told me last week. "Fernando Poe, Jr. will be the president for the first six years, Noli de Castro for the next six, and Bong Revilla for the last six. Brace yourself, *pards*, we will be old men before the light of reason dawns once again in this country."

I must confess this possibility had lingered at the back of my mind. Or at least the possibility that FPJ will be followed by De Castro as the next president. Revilla had not yet loomed in the horizon then, but he has so now. My mind simply refused to accept it, or articulate it. I did express the thought of what to expect if FPJ and De Castro became president and vice president respectively in a blank column, and got deluged by assenting voices—though largely from the middle class. I know that because they communicated through e-mails and text messages.

The prospect is alarming. And not just for Malacañang but for the Senate and the Batasan as well. It is not inconceivable that the future Senate would be populated by Revilla, Ramon Revilla, Robert Jaworski, Loren Legarda (if or when she goes back to being so), Rudy Fernandez, Herbert Bautista, Lito Lapid, Joey Marquez, Paquito Diaz, Korina Sanchez and Kris Aquino. Not only is it not inconceivable, it is very probable. The people above are variously senators already, have expressed a desire to be so and are being egged to be so.

I must confess too I did not see this coming after the first Edsa. The "snap elections," quite apart from Edsa itself, was a gratifying thing, despite its awesome tragedies, notably the murder of Evelio Javier. It was an election that went beyond a choice between Cory and Marcos, it was a choice between freedom and tyranny, life and death. That would soon birth a world where elections would be a choice between one set of clowns and another, well, this is the Philippines.

Someone did ask me last week how something like this could have happened. My answer is that it is the (absurdly) logical conclusion of what we call, completely accurately, the "politics of personality." What is the "politics of personality" really, particularly when applied to elections? It is the choice between people who offer charm rather than vision, who offer charisma rather than conviction, who offer personality rather than rationality. But that answer itself raises the question of where the politics of personality comes from.

My answer to that in turn is that it comes from not having any parties at all. Parties at least in the real sense of a political group organized around a set of beliefs whose members owe allegiance to that set of beliefs. What we have are ersatz, impromptu, improvised, tentative, fleeting, brittle, provisional groups that harbor people who happen to be allies at the moment. They are normally built around a powerful person who is either the president or his/her strongest challenger. Persons are bigger than parties. One person wins, everybody joins his party, including those previously belonging to rival camps.

The nostalgic view is to suggest we go back to the two-party system before martial law. But that two-party system suffered from the same problem. The Nacionalista and Liberal parties had nothing to distinguish them from each other, which made abandoning one for the other the easiest thing in the world. The most dramatic being Ramon Magsaysay's and Ferdinand Marcos' defection from the Liberal Party to the Nacionalista, the first in 1953 and the second in 1965. Both ran against the incumbent as standard bearer of their new party, and both won.

You have a system like that, the question is simply how to sell personalities, not how to sell platforms. Or particularly in presidential races, how to sell the president. Even then, image was a strong point, not vision—Magsaysay cradling the dead body of Moises Padilla, Imelda Marcos regaling the audience with face and song. But before martial law, the decisive element was machinery and resources. That was the main instrument for selling a president. You did not belong to either Nacionalista or Liberal, you didn't have a prayer.

That isn't the case anymore, as the 1992 elections showed. Fidel Ramos won, with Miriam Santiago close behind, neither of them being regarded as the strongest contenders—Ramon Mitra and Danding Cojuangco were. What changed was not that the voters had become more politicized, it was merely that there was a new instrument for selling a president. That was the media. By 1992, it became patently clear that media—TV in particular—had made the most tremendous inroads into the national consciousness and were capable of manipulating it to determine the outcome of elections. Pretty decisively at the national level.

What was being sold was the same product (personality), only the most effective marketing method had changed (media over machinery). But now the obvious question: Who stands most to benefit from a situation where media can decisively influence national elections? The answer is people who are most exposed to media. Those are the entertainers. Those are the people in media themselves, notably television.

Can something be done about it? Well, that is an entire question unto itself, and one not easily answered. For the moment, the way things are, more and more entertainers are bound to entertain the thought of becoming congressmen and senators and presidents. Without the opposite development of more and more politicians entertaining the thought of becoming entertainers—they have been so all this time anyway.

Over the next few years, expect more and more people to rush in where angels fear to tread. And I don't mean lovers.

Two-person presidential contest shaping up

ANALYSIS

Amando Doronila

IN JUST two months, the presidential race has narrowed into a two-person contest—between President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and opposition candidate, actor Fernando Poe Jr. In this attrition process, the third choice, former Education Secretary Raul Roco, appears to have run out of steam and is in danger of falling behind. This is the picture drawn by the Social Weather Stations survey of Jan. 16-22.

As the survey indicates, President Macapagal, the underdog in surveys of the past seven months, has made a late spurt to close the gap between her and Poe. Her catch-up was, however, at the expense of Roco, indicating that there is no lane for a third runner and that the May elections is developing into a close fight between the President and the main opposition candidate.

Although the latest survey puts Poe still ahead, it indicates he is not on full gallop and his momentum is slowing down. The survey shows the President as the biggest gainer. In the January survey, Poe leads 36 percent, with the President running second with 27 percent, and Roco, third with 19 percent. Who gained most and lost most in the latest poll may be seen from the data over the past seven months—from June to January.

The results have disappointed Poe adherents who have expected him to gain momentum as election nears and create an avalanche that would bury all his rivals, most of all the President. The results also shattered Roco supporters who had hope their bet would build up momentum as a third force. With the race turning into a two-person contest, this year's election is breaking away from the mold of multi-candidate races that characterized the 1992 and 1998 elections (when there were no less than five serious candidates) and is moving back to the two-person contest of the two party-system in the pre-martial law years.

Poe has taken an early lead since June 2003, when he polled 16 percent, holding the front rank and making a big blip of 27 percent in November with an 11 percentage point gain. In January, he maintained the 11 percentage point gain, to garner 36 percent.

But the more dramatic result was registered by President Macapagal. She pulled herself up from 15 percent in June (compared to Poe's 16 percent) to 17 percent in November, leapfrogging to 27 percent in January, a gain of 10 percentage points.

Roco's latest rating has proved to be a disappointment and dampened expectations that he would emerge as a viable dark horse and edge out the President as the race continues. In June, Roco showed early promise. He polled 19 percent ahead of Poe's 16 percent and the President's 15 percent. He kept running ahead of Poe and the President until January. Roco maintained an average 19 percent until November when Poe raced past him with 27 percent. In January, the President dislodged him from second place, with a 9 percentage point gap.

The survey data reveal that Poe is merely struggling to hold on to the rate of his gains, and this is not a sign that he is unbeatable or invincible as his handlers project him.

On the contrary, the data contradict the perception held last month that Poe is a sure winner and the President is a sure loser. The January survey, in fact, underlines the point that the election has entered a phase where the unexpected is likely to happen. It shows Roco has hit a plateau, fueling proposals for Roco to withdraw and line up behind the President. The survey data, showing the President's chances of turning back the Poe advantage have improved, give logic to the proposals.

The event that gave the biggest boost to the President's chances was the decision of Sen. Noli de Castro to run as the administration's vice presidential candidate. In the November survey, Poe and De Castro virtually tied at 24-25 percent. De Castro's alignment with the president wrought havoc to the opposition line-up. De Castro, with 52 percent, walloped Poe's running mate, Sen. Loren Legarda, who only had 37 percent.

Although it does not follow that De Castro's vote-drawing appeal will automatically translate into votes for the President, it can't be discounted that his vote could only lift the President's chances and this is important in a closely contested election.

As shown by the survey, De Castro's decision allowed the President to overtake Roco. The survey shows that Poe wrested the lead in Metro Manila from Roco. He polled 35 percent, Roco 23 percent. Last November, Roco had 27 percent in MM and Poe, 23 percent. A good sign for the President is that she improved her rating in MM and the rest of Luzon, tying with Roco for second place, although still behind Poe. The survey shows Poe leads in the rest of Luzon although the President leads in the Visayas. Poe took the lead in Mindanao after De Castro switched to the vice presidency.

Since November, the middle and upper classes had been in pain for someone who can turn back Poe. They had agonized over a choice between the President and Roco. In the January survey, it looks like they had decided to switch toward the President.

Now the class battle has sharpened, with Poe holding the edge in the lower classes who outnumber the upper class. In the battle for the support of the lower classes, the critical issue is whether Poe can, without social programs for the poor or economic programs to create jobs and revive the economy, lift their lot. The administration can drive home the theme of the betrayal of the poor by their champion, Joseph Estrada. The poor do not need false messiahs. The critical question is whether Poe can deliver the goods to the poor. Cheap action movies cannot convert demagogic claptrap to food.

What parties stand for

AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David

WE were talking about the senatorial candidates and who we thought had the best chances of winning in a crowded field in "Strictly Politics" over ANC, hosted by Pia Hontiveros. I was a guest along with fellow INQUIRER columnist Neal Cruz, and Professor Romero of the UP political science department. Before the show, we had each been asked to come up with a list of 12 candidates who we thought had the best chances of winning. Those we thought would probably win, mind, not those we thought **should** win, though we were asked to mention our favorites later in the show.

Then Pia brought up the chances of former DENR Secretary Heherson Alvarez. Our faces made it obvious we didn't think much of his chances, and Cruz tried to put it in words: "Well, he's running as an independent. He'll have a hard time. *Kawawa naman.*" I had to chime in and say that I didn't think Sonny helped himself by crying foul over his exclusion from the K-4 slate, that his loud protestations only made him look "pathetic." I think I made things worse by following that up by protesting that "Sonny is my friend, but..."

As Cecile Guidote Alvarez, Sonny's wife, told me, they received "possibly a dozen calls (from people) upset with you labeling Sonny as 'pathetic.'"

Over the phone, Cecile said she and her friends would have simply shrugged off criticism from other commentators but not from me, whom they considered a friend and presumably a supporter of his senatorial bid. But let me say at this point that I hope making friends with people in politics doesn't—or shouldn't—prevent me from making honest observations, criticisms even, about their work.

* * *

THOUGH from experience I know explaining oneself after the fact simply makes things worse, let me try to expand on that "pathetic" comment.

My heart really went out to Sonny Alvarez in the few days that the administration senatorial slate was being firmed up. It was certainly disappointing to note that simply by virtue of low ratings in the surveys, he would be nudged out of the slate by Erap "defenders" and "sympathizers" like Sonny Osmeña, Orly Mercado and even a political neophyte like lawyer Pia Cayetano. But adding insult to injury was that the party leaders would keep him dangling for so long, keeping him on hand like a spare tire, while waiting for Miriam Defensor-Santiago to make up her mind.

But I thought that, having been treated so shabbily already, Sonny should simply have dusted himself off and walked off the arena with his dignity intact, instead of raising a hue and cry about his mistreatment at the hands of the party and the "betrayal" of the spirit of Edsa II as symbolized by his rejection.

That's what I thought was "pathetic," the loud protestations of wounded pride and the breast-beating over the sacrifices he and his family had paid in fighting the Marcos regime and then the excesses of Erap and his cronies.

* * *

THIS is not to belittle those sacrifices, especially the torture and death of his brother, nor to trivialize the hardships Sonny, Cecile and their children went through in those years of deprivation in exile. But there is no denying either that Sonny Alvarez has used this personal history to great success in furthering his political career. Can he blame party leaders, and maybe even the voting public, for thinking perhaps it's time we put the story to rest?

To be sure, Sonny had valid points to raise in the way the K-4 senatorial slate was formed. Everyone, even President Macapagal-Arroyo, expresses support for a politics based on "principles" and "issues." And certainly, there cannot be any more central or crucial an issue in politics than good governance, the application of the principles of transparency and accountability, the very same issue that the Erap impeachment trial was all about. Then the party brought to power by Edsa II turns around and selects candidates to support on the basis of "winnability," popularity and personality.

In a letter, Cecile called this an "assault on the Edsa heritage," saying that Sonny's decision to buck the odds and run as an independent was an "act of conscience," to "clarify (issues) and educate the nation to prevent further damage to our people's psyche."

But if he felt so strongly about this, then Sonny should simply have launched on his Quixotic crusade straightaway, instead of hanging around in hopes he would still make it to No. 12 on the K-4 slate, then making noises of protest when he failed. Did he honestly think he could promote the politics of principles and good governance alongside some of the names on the administration slate?

* * *

I SAID on "Strictly Politics" that I don't think there would be many people voting a "straight" ticket come May. That's because none of the tickets, or parties, it seems, stands for a distinct principle or philosophy of government. Of course, platforms and party principles have never really been worth much more than the paper they're printed on, especially in this country. But the cynicism seems especially prevalent in these elections. When party leaders pick and choose candidates with less care and consideration than party hostesses spend on their guest lists, can voters be blamed for casually crossing party lines and basing their choices for the Senate on good looks, clever sound bites and cleverly crafted images?

"Voter education" projects are mushrooming around the country, an earnest effort of good-hearted citizens to get Filipinos to vote wisely and honestly. But these would all be for naught if our political parties continue to think of us as idiots—and we continue giving them good reason to think so.

Historical corrections

LOOKING BACK

Ambeth R. Ocampo

EACH year on Feb. 3, a simple ceremony is held on the grounds of Manila City Hall to commemorate what was formerly known as the "Liberation" of Manila in 1945. For people who lost their loved ones during those terrible days—victims of Japanese assault on unarmed civilians—the end of the war was definitely not liberation but murder, rape, looting and arson. Carmen Guerrero Cruz Nakpil, former chair of the Manila Historical Commission, insisted on calling this bloody part of history the "Battle for Manila." The battle for the change of name for said event was a long uphill one, but last year Manila Mayor Lito Atienza took notice and finally renamed it "Battle for Manila." We hope the name remains, if only to open our memories further and see other facts not covered in our textbooks.

This morning another correction will be made on the historical records of Manila, this time touching on the start of the Philippine-American War in 1899. As far as I can remember, Philippine-American War broke out on a small stone bridge in San Juan formerly known as "Balsahan." There were simple commemorative programs held there annually, followed by a flower offering and picture-taking near the official bronze plaque laid on the bridge in 1940 by the Philippine Historical Committee, stating: "Here at 9:00 in the evening of February 4th, 1899 Private William Grayson of the First Nebraska Volunteers fired the shot that started the Filipino-American War."

There will be no more activities on that bridge starting this year, because the marker has been removed from San Juan Bridge for transfer to a site on the corner of Silencio and Sociego Streets in Sta. Mesa, Manila. The National Historical Institute (NHI), through Board Resolution 7 s. 2003, recognized the Sta. Mesa site, not San Juan Bridge, as the place where the first shot of the Philippine-American War was fired. How I wish the documentation was more detailed so we would know more than the name of the American soldier who started the war. History does not record the name of the unfortunate Filipino shot on that night of Feb. 4, 1899.

Textbook history narrates a tense atmosphere in that period. Relations between Filipinos and the Americans then had been strained. The US "allies" occupied Manila and pushed Aguinaldo outside the capital. Positions were taken and when Filipinos attempted to cross American lines, they were ordered by Grayson to stop. The American shouted, "Halt!" which was probably taken by the friendly Pinoys as a rude greeting, so they shouted back "Halto!" probably with a smile obscured in the dark. Grayson shouts "Halt!" a second time and when the Filipinos refused to stop, he aimed his rifle and fired a shot. (Whether the shot killed or just hit a Filipino is not clear from the various sources.)

Naturally, the Filipinos retaliated and the whole evening filled with the sounds of gunfire. It has often been claimed that we lost the war because the enemy had superior arms and lots of ammunition. I never gave this much thought until an Ateneo undergrad thesis by Jose Amiel Angeles pointed out that if the Filipinos shot up the evening of Feb. 4 they did have arms and ammunition, lots of it. Yet the following morning, Feb. 5, there were very few casualties to show for all the rounds consumed. This definitely needs another, closer, look.

Both American and Filipino sources agree that the first shot was fired by the Americans. The Filipino sources I read did not mention the shot happening on Balsahan Bridge. Dr. Benito Legarda, in a monograph published before his appointment to the NHI Board, pointed out that the shot was fired somewhere between Blockhouse 7 (Manila City Boundary) and Barrio Santol (Sampaloc) on the connecting road that is now Calle Sosiego. On the basis of this and after a series of deliberations, NHI Board decided to have the marker transferred from San Juan to Sta. Mesa. The installation of the marker at the new site in Sta. Mesa will be done this morning.

The Philippine-American War is often glossed over in our textbooks. Worse, Filipinos do not realize that at the time those shots were fired, the US Congress was voting on the ratification of the Treaty of Paris that ended the Spanish-American War. One of the provisions of this treaty was the US purchase of the Philippines from Spain for $20 million. When news of the outbreak of the Philippine-American War reached Washington, the US Congress, in a fighting mood after hearing the allegation that the Filipinos fired the first shot, ratified the treaty with a slim margin of one vote. That led to the American administration of the Philippines for the next half century.

In most history books the Filipino struggle for freedom against the Spaniards and the Japanese is very clear, but the war against the Americans is ignored. The latter was documented as nothing but a small insignificant uprising against the legitimate colonial government—the Philippine Insurrection against the United States.

Recently, the US Library of Congress changed the subject headings "Philippine Insurrection" on their catalogues (and everywhere else in the world that follow the LC classification) to "Philippine-American War." A seemingly insignificant, superficial little change on a nomenclature, but its impact on our historical consciousness remains yet to be seen.

* * *

Comments are welcome at aocampo@ateneo.edu

Is it a bird? Is it Superman? No it's...

PINOY KASI

Michael L. Tan

NEXT time you see people looking up the sky, it's not because they're looking for Superman (or, our new local version, Zsazsa Zaturnah). People are worrying if the next plague might literally descend from the heavens.

The fears have been sparked by scientists speculating that countries so far spared from the bird flu outbreak—the Philippines included—might eventually be infected through migratory birds.

Panic has never helped to prevent epidemics, so let's get some of the facts straight by tapping into medical and cultural ecology, sciences which look at how human interactions with the natural environment result in health or illness.

What does medical ecology tells us about bird flu?

First, we know bird flu is not new. Animal Health Australia, the equivalent of our Bureau of Animal Industry, says that there have been 18 recorded outbreaks of this "highly pathogenic avian influenza" or HPAI since 1955.

This bird flu is caused by a particular virus with many different subtypes and strains, all of which are constantly mutating. Domesticated species, especially chickens and turkeys, are very susceptible and die quickly after infection. Among the wild bird species, the guinea fowl, pheasant, partridge and quail (*pugo*) are also susceptible. Waterfowls, such as ducks and many migratory species, are potential carriers, but they do not display signs of the infection, which is why we're not about to see sick migratory birds dropping from the sky. What happens is that they pass on the infections to domestic fowl when they're on the ground.

Usually, the bird flu virus is passed on from birds to birds, through feces and respiratory secretions, but occasionally, a mutation may emerge which affects humans. Again, all this is not new. The deadly flu pandemics (world wide epidemics) of the 20th century, including the "Spanish" flu of 1918 which killed 40 million people worldwide, are believed to have involved strains with genetic material from avian influenza. The name "Spanish flu" is a misnomer because these pandemics most probably started in China, and then spread to the rest of the world.

The current headache for medical scientists is a strain given the deceptively dull name of H51N. (The name is based on the subtype and strain.) H51N first jumped the species barrier from birds to humans in 1997, killing seven people in Hong Kong. Then it went dormant, until this year.

Medical scientists are more worried with the current outbreak because it's been reported in 10 Asian countries, all of which are densely populated, with humans living in close contact with chickens. This isn't just the contact made at farms but also in wet markets, where many Asians still buy their chickens live because of a preference for fresh meat.

It's important to stress that right now the infections are passed from birds to humans only, although the World Health Organization is worried about two women in Vietnam who may have caught bird flu from an infected brother. What could happen is that birds transmit the virus to humans, where it then mutates, incorporating genetic material from human influenza viruses. The virus then becomes transmissible from one human to another.

As long as bird flu is confined to birds and is transmitted only from the birds to humans, we still have a window of opportunity to control the outbreak, and this is to stop the virus at its source, meaning, the birds. The Australians use a rather dramatic term, "stamping out," to describe the mass slaughter of fowls and birds that has to be done for disease control.

Stamping out is next to impossible with the migratory birds, but it can be done with the domesticated species. During the 1997 Hong Kong outbreak, government authorities went into a massive culling of chickens and ducks and were thus able to prevent the disease from spreading.

Hong Kong was a relatively easy case to handle because, geographically, it is self-contained. Now that large countries are being affected, it may not be as easy. Chicken raisers and, in Thailand, owners of fighting cocks, have resisted the culling. There's also the problem of choosing an effective way of killing large numbers of birds. Carbon dioxide from dried ice is used as a quick way to kill the chickens, which must then be buried or incinerated. Improper disposal of the carcasses could actually allow infected feces or mucus to spread.

This latest bird flu epidemic shows again how politics affects health and illness. There are suspicions that government officials in Thailand and China have suppressed information about outbreaks, as China did with the SARS outbreak last year. This has led to the loss of valuable time and allowed the virus to spread.

Unfortunately, the media coverage of chickens being slaughtered is leading people to think that the chickens were culled because eating them would cause bird flu. In reality, cooking kills the virus so Thailand's Prime Minister and our own Health Secretary Manuel Dayrit were right to get themselves photographed eating chicken, as a way of assuring the public it's safe to eat chickens. (As a vegetarian though, I'd tell you it's still better not to eat chickens, simply for humane reasons.)

Will the bird flu virus arrive in the Philippines? It's hard to say. The virus does thrive better in cold environments but then Indonesia, which is as warm as the Philippines, has also been infected.

As usual, we're coping by sending around text jokes (sample: Is bird flu the past tense of birds fly?), and a bit of nervous glancing at the sky. But really, the problems are down here on earth. Let's just hope our Health Department and the Bureau of Animal Industry have a contingency plan to handle bird flu if it does come into the country.

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Stop sale of wildlife

THE PHILIPPINES may be a Third World country. But we are still blessed with a diverse wildlife that can no longer be found in more advanced nations. It is therefore sad that we can sometimes be extremely cruel to the very things which make us rich.

Beside the highway in Mabalacat, Pampanga, near the Japanese Kamikaze shrine, is a makeshift stall selling wild animals for food. Aside from pythons and cobras sold by the kilo, there are rows and rows of beautiful wild birds hanging on strings, sold at P50 each.

According to the vendors, these birds, which they call "wistildings," are caught in the forests and plains of Nueva Ecija. They are then transported all the way to Mabalacat, where they are hung upside down by their feet, still alive, until they are bought to be eaten or they die from hunger and shock.

If only I had the means I would have bought all these birds and set them free, but I knew that it wouldn't be the answer, for more of them would be trapped and killed the next day, and the next, and the next.

I would like to appeal to the Department of Environment and Natural Resources and local authorities to do something about the plight of these birds. Whether or not they are in the list of protected animals, their continued decline must surely be having a major impact on ecological balance.

God created these birds as gifts for our forests and plains. I'm sure He never intended that they be hung upside down by the side of the road.

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DPWH answers road questions

THIS is in response to the letter titled "Road questions we'd like answered" of Leon M. Manalo.

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According to Dir. Emerson Benitez, DPWH-BAC chair, a bidder is considered qualified if he passed the technical, legal and financial requirements stated in Republic Act 9184 or the Procurement Reform Act. Government biddings are open to all contractors. Invitations to participate in such biddings are published in national broadsheets and in the DPWH website. D.M. Consunji Inc. has been an active participant in the various biddings conducted by the DPWH. Ayala Corporation may indeed be a reputable contractor. However, the nature of its business is mostly on buildings and real estates/land developing.

Regarding the questions on road quality, Bureau of Maintenance OIC Director Carlos Mutuc explains that most of our highway networks were built when the volume and type of traffic was very much different than what we have today. Road deterioration occurs because the roads were not designed to carry the present traffic and overloaded trucks.

Director Mutuc also says that our national roads certainly need improvement and the police authorities must exercise their powers to apprehend overloaded transport vehicles. Studies conducted by road authorities revealed that the country needs P15 billion annually to adequately maintain our national highways, a much higher amount compared to the P4 billion yearly allocation for road maintenance. Director Mutuc however assures that strict quality control measures in the construction and maintenance of highways are being implemented.

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PTC is pure extortion

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We in the Trade Union Congress Party (TUCP) call on Bayan Muna to denounce the PTC imposition and expressly call for a stop to the collection of PTC fees. The spirit of the party-list law was to make available to marginalized sectors—which are naturally disadvantaged in electoral campaigns due to lack of resources—the chance to have direct representation in Congress. The imposition of PTC in NPA-controlled areas is pure extortion and will be an added burden to the already disadvantaged party-list organizations.

Rep. Satur Ocampo recently disclosed that the NPA is not asking Bayan Muna to pay permit-to-campaign (PTC) fees because "the NPA understands that we could not afford to pay." TUCP reiterates its call for all accredited party-list groups to stand together and be firm in resisting all forms of extortion by the NPA. Our members are already hard-pressed and disadvantaged. What little funds we are able to raise should not be used to line the war chests of the CPP-NPA and their supported organizations.

If party-list groups are sincere in their commitment to electoral democracy, and clean and fair elections, they should not compromise their principles and succumb to threats of violence. They should rather come out and denounce all parties who participate in and benefit from the extortion campaign of the CPP-NPA-NDF.

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Where lies the hope?

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Regardless how strenuously pundits, columnists and politicians try to shift the blame for the decline of the Philippines to colonialism, the world economy, unfair tariffs or competition etc., there is in reality only one culprit: the Filipino. His unstable temperament, his irascible character, his runaway fecundity, his flamboyant religiosity, his scofflaw attitude, his fluorescent ego, do NOT a citizen make: those qualities are more likely to produce an outlaw, a character savagely prevalent in Philippine society.

Is there some reason for such behavioral flaws? I believe the most important social problem in the Philippines is poor and unevenly distributed education. To put it bluntly the Filipino is ignorant; he doesn't have a clue what the rest of the world is like. Or even what the Philippines are like beyond the borders of his town or province.

Another consideration would be the failure of the two dominant religions to produce decent, law-abiding, "good" citizens. The emphasis of those religions is on obedience to dogma and ritual, and the seductive but mythical after-life, not on making good citizens for a here-and-now Republic.

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So the only hope for the Republic lies in remodeling the Filipino and that must be done by first remodeling schools and teachers. That is the most pressing objective any Philippine president should immediately pursue.

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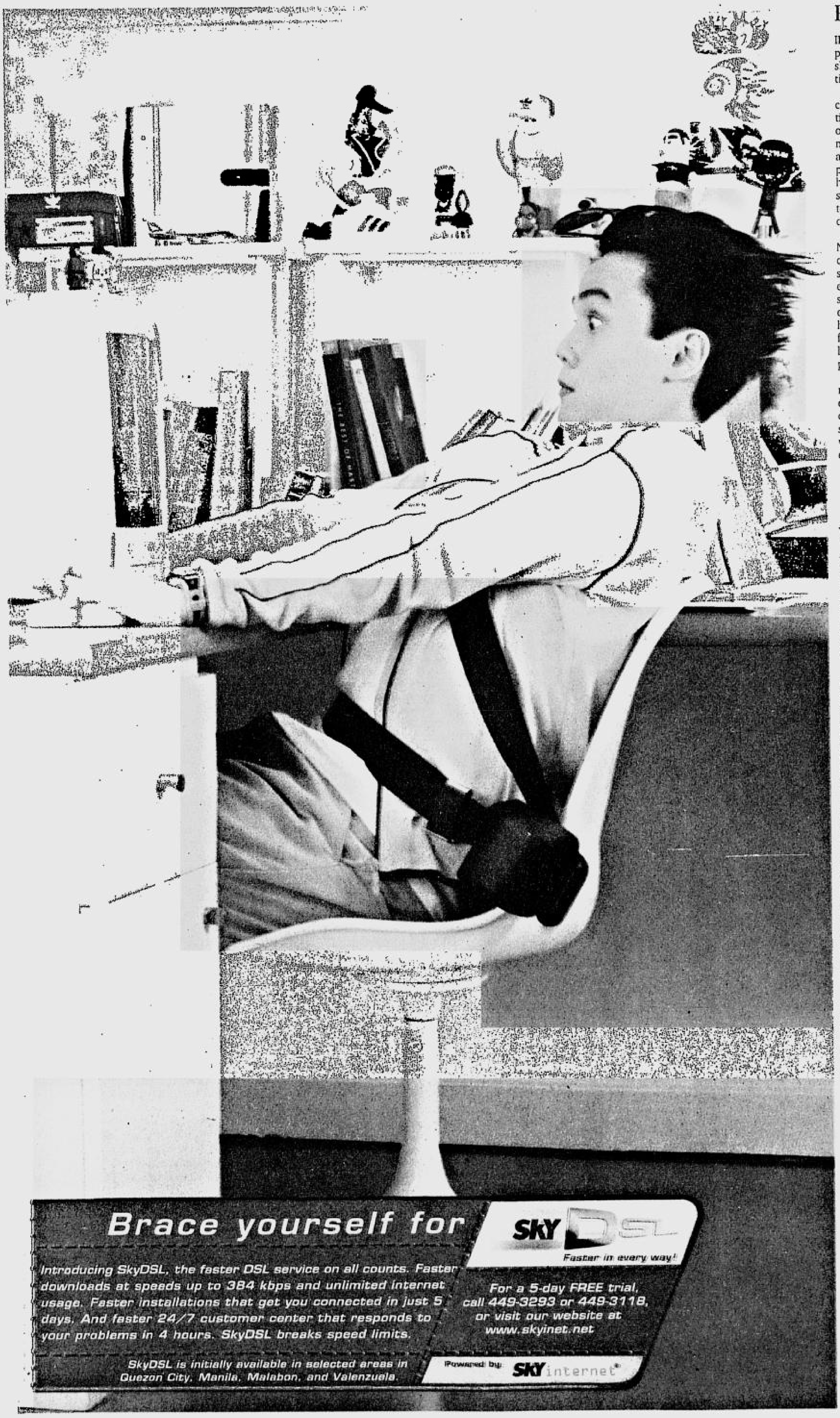

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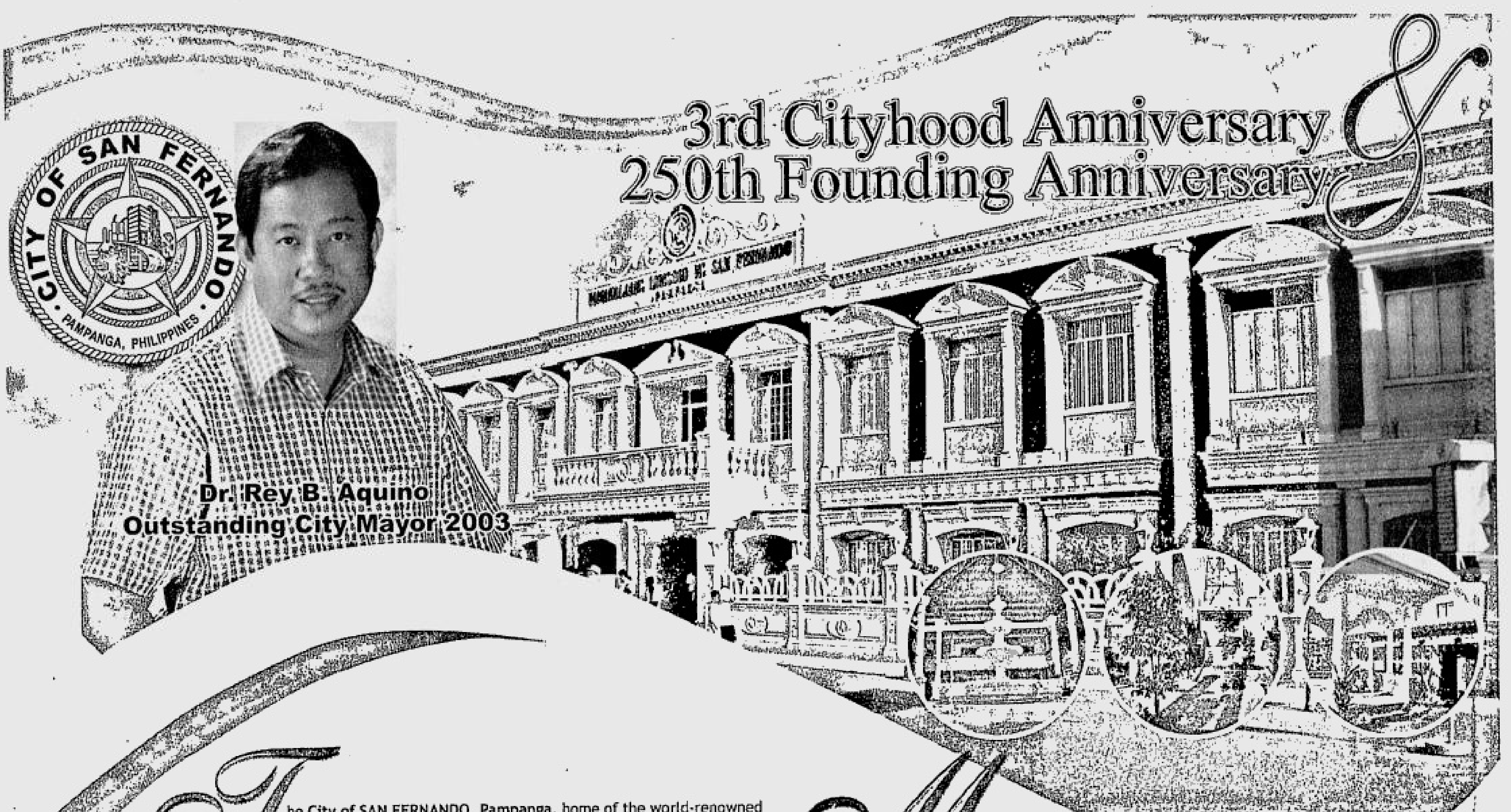

Dr. Rey B. Aquino
Outstanding City Mayor 2003

The City of SAN FERNANDO, Pampanga, home of the world-renowned giant lanterns, is one of only two cities in the Province of Pampanga, and serves as the provincial capital and regional seat of government in Central Luzon (Region III). Located 67 kilometers north of Manila, 16 kilometers south of the Clark Special Economic Zone, and 50 km east of Subic Bay, San Fernando is strategically positioned at the crossroads of Central Luzon. So travellers and commuters coming from and going to Clark, Subic, Metro Manila, Cabanatuan and Baguio City traverse it.

Bounded by the Municipalities of Bacolor on the southwest, Mexico on the northeast and Sto. Tomas on the southeast, and by Angeles City on the northwest, the City of San Fernando is composed of 35 barangays with a total land area of 6,774 hectares and a population of 221,857. It has a projected daytime population of 1,000,000.

San Fernando is famous for its original **Christmas Lanterns** brought about by the creativity and craftmanship of Fernandinos. Aside from the colorful lanterns, the City of San Fernando takes pride in being known for its delicious Kapampangan cuisine, as well as its meat products, most popular of which are the tocino and longganiza.

Rich in history and culture, San Fernando is replete with remnants of our colonial architectural heritage. Among them are numerous ancestral mansions several declared by the National Historical Institute as heritage houses, a number of Gabaldon schoolhouses, the Metropolitan Cathedral of San Fernando, and the San Fernando Train Station. Numerous festivals and religious practices are held in San Fernando annually. such as the world-renowned Giant Lantern Festival (Third Week of December), the San Pedro Cutud Lenten Rites (Good Friday), the Sinukwan Festival (First Week of December), El Circulo Fernandino (First Week of May), Saklitan Burarol: Kite Dogfight Festival (Last Saturday of January), the Piestang Tugak: San Fernando Frog Festival (Last Week of August) and the Lulung Kabayu: Tilbury Races.

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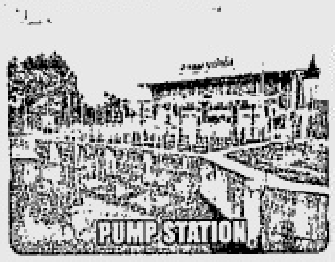
MONUMENTO FERNANDINO

BALUYUT BRIDGE RESTORATION

COMPOSTING CENTER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We have many things to be thankful for as you celebrate your founding anniversary today. Through our unity and hard work, our economy has remained stable despite the difficulties we have faced last year. Now we must redouble our efforts to attain our goal of building a strong Republic.

To do this, we must relentlessly pursue genuine economic reform and maintain constancy of policy. As I have emphasized time and again, it is through national unity, good governance and industry that we will be able to realize our aspirations. Let us do this by going beyond self and putting the country first in all our actions and intentions.

Nawa'y bigyang buhay ng inyong pagdiriwang ang pakikilsa sa pambansang adhikaing makamit ang pangmatagalang kapayapaan at kaunlaran para sa ating bayan. Tulung-tulong tayo sa pagtupad ng ating mga tungkulin at pagsuporta sa mga programang magsusulong sa pambansang progreso. Muli, maligayang araw ng pagkakatatag at patnubayan nawa tayong lahat ng Poong Maykapal. Mabuhay!

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The City of San Fernando should continue to move in unison and sustain its premiere role as a center of Capampangan Culture and trade. This is not difficult to do, considering our strategic location and of course considering the wealth of talent that our growing population possesses.

The great Greek philosopher Socrates could not have been more correct when he said that to live a fulfilling life, a man should always be one with the polis. I continue to live that sense of fulfillment because I have always seen myself as one with San Fernando. You, my fellow Fernandino are one and the same.

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Representative
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With these thoughts, I would like to congratulate the local officials for their contributions to the city's overall progress and economic development with the hope that this year will be even better than the previous one.

Happy Founding Anniversary!

HON. MANUEL M. LAPID (Sgd.)
Governor
Province of Pampanga

I convey my warmest greetings to the City of San Fernando, Pampanga on the occasion of it's 250th Founding Anniversary and 3rd Cityhood Anniversary. I commend the local government unit and the people of San Fernando City for their exemplary performances, meritorious accomplishments, and undying cooperation through the years. Your achievements in this city are worthy of emulation and will serve as an inspiration to everyone.

I wish the City of San Fernando more success and pray for its continued growth as a young and vibrant city yearning for world recognition. God Bless your city. MABUHAY!

HON. JUAN MIGUEL M. ARROYO (Sgd.)
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The length and breadth of time when measured seem so short when we count nine (9) years of work together, all of you have made this period an immensely meaningful and successful experience. The last three (3) years of this period witnessed the pinnacle of what we can do together; our cityhood and inherent accomplishment through the excellence of the Kapampangan and Fernandino in us.

In such short a time, our young city has been awarded Most Competitive City in the Small City category in 2002, and recently as the 2nd Most Competitive City for 2003 in the Mid-sized City Category. Moreover, your trust and confidence in me as the first city mayor garnered the award of being one of the six Outstanding City Mayors in the Philippines for 2003.

Much can still be done for you and the city have all the potentials for development and success! As a community and people we count 250 years of historical existence, the recent three paves the way for greater heights in these dynamic times. Thank you fellow Fernandinos for your enduring faith for it shall always be a privilege and honor to serve YOU and the **CITY OF SAN FERNANDO, PAMPANGA**

HON. DR. REY B. AQUINO (Sgd.)
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The City of San Fernando, Pampanga continues to shine! Now on its 3rd year, it has passed all its birth pangs through the joint partnership of its duly elected leaders, non-government organization, and its constituents in general. The vast infrastructure projects-the New City Hall, the major road networks, road widening all over, fly-over, high rise buildings, mall expansions, rehabilitation of public markets, etc., all these are indicators of spiraling and sustained economic growth.

Indeed, the Fernandinos are the people gifted by the Lord Almighty with great abundance-economic stability, peace and order, and selfless, dedicated leaders which put above anything else the promotion of the general welfare of their constituents, way above their personal interests which was complemented by its equally supportive people.

Confident that people empowerment is the key to success of every government, I urge every Fernandino to get involve. Support your duly-elected leaders, join hands in the manning the reins of your government and surely, our component City of San Fernando today will become the next highly urbanized city of the province of Pampanga in the very near future.

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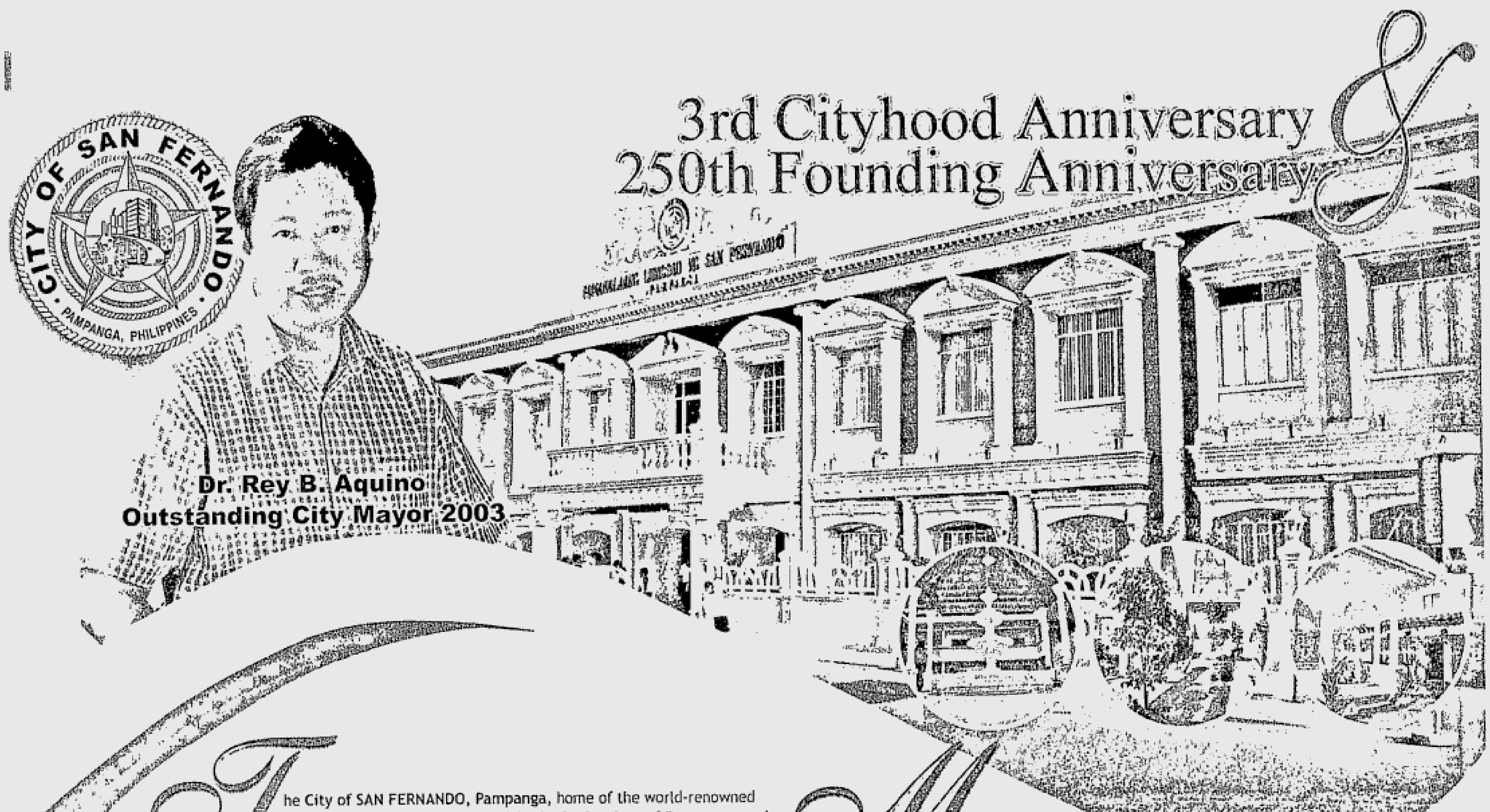
3rd Cityhood Anniversary & 250th Founding Anniversary



Dr. Rey B. Aquino
Outstanding City Mayor 2003

The City of SAN FERNANDO, Pampanga, home of the world-renowned giant lanterns, is one of only two cities in the Province of Pampanga, and serves as the provincial capital and regional seat of government in Central Luzon (Region III). Located 67 kilometers north of Manila, 16 kilometers south of the Clark Special Economic Zone, and 50 km east of Subic Bay, San Fernando is strategically positioned at the crossroads of Central Luzon. So travellers and commuters coming from and going to Clark, Subic, Metro Manila, Cabanatuan and Baguio City traverse it.

Bounded by the Municipalities of Bacolor on the southwest, Mexico on the northeast and Sto. Tomas on the southeast, and by Angeles City on the northwest, the City of San Fernando is composed of 35 barangays with a total land area of 6,774 hectares and a population of 221,857. It has a projected daytime population of 1,000,000.

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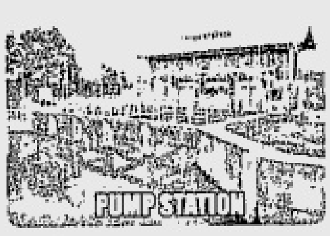
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US projects going to waste, says gov

ISABELA CITY—Some of the infrastructure projects funded and implemented by American soldiers in Basilan as part of military exercises in the province have gone to waste.

Basilan Gov. Wahab Akbar and Bishop Martin Jumoad said only the two renovated hospitals in Lamitan and in this city, the water system in Maluso and two classroom buildings in each of the seven towns remain useful.

Akbar said the road projects from Tuburan town going to Sumisip and Tipo-Tipo towns, which was paved by the American soldiers in October 2002, have become almost impassable.

Akbar said aside from the road having been damaged by rain, "there was no maintenance from the community."

Akbar said funds for the maintenance of the roads should come from the national government through the Department of Public Works and Highways.

"It's like we were traversing over rice fields," Bishop Jumoad recounted his experience when they visited Sumisip late last year with Papal Nuncio Antonio Franco.

The bishop said continuous heavy rains brought limestone and gravel to the road and the local government did not take the initiative to temporarily maintain it.

"If the national government could not do something about it, I think the provincial government has to do something," Jumoad told the INQUIRER.

Aside from the road projects, Akbar said some communities have not benefited from the artesian wells constructed by the American soldiers.

He said the wells' pipes have become rusty because of the type of soil in the area.

The US military and its counterpart, the Armed Forces of the Philippines, reported that they were able to renovate about 79.2 miles of road and erected two bridges as part of the humanitarian assistance aspect of the exercises.

The report added that the Americans had undertaken over 30 projects in Basilan amounting to about $2 million. The projects included two school buildings in each town, 25 new fresh water wells and the rehabilitation of a 3-km water pipeline for Maluso town.

"The Maluso water system is very functional and has helped more than the previous number of water consumers in that municipality, but I don't know what happened to the other projects," Jumoad said.

"Probably, the national government should have to go back and inspect (the projects)," Jumoad added. *Julie S. Alipala, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

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Tones

Titles	Artist	Keywords
Can We Still Be Friends	Todd Rungren	CANWESTILL
What Matters Most	Kenny Rankin	WATMATERSMOST
Fallen	Lauren Wood	FALLEN
A Penny For Your Thoughts	Tavares	APENNY
Getting To Know Each Other	Ariel Rivera	GETTING2KNOW
Knocks Me Off My Feet	Stevie Wonder	KNOCKSMEOFF
Overjoyed	Stevie Wonder	OVERJOYED
It Might Be You	Stephen Bishop	ITMITEBU
Weak	SWV	WEAK
When I Met You	Apo Hiking Society	WHENIMETU
Jealous	Nina	JEALOUS
Misty Glass Window	Pido With Take 1	MISTYGLASS
The Man I Was With You	Jimmy Bondoc	DAMANIWASWID
If You Want To Be Mine	Luke Mijares	IFYOUWANT
True	Spandue Ballet	TRUE
Get Here	Oleta Adams	GETHERE
Be My Number Two	Joe Jackson	BEMYNUMBER2
Loving You	Nina	LOVINGYOU
Love Is All That MAtters	Eric Carmen	LOVEISALL
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Banana farm encroaching on Apo, lawyers say

DAVAO CITY—The city legal office has found a 6.5-hectare banana plantation in Barangay Manuel Guianga, Tugbok District here encroaching on Mt. Apo's natural park in violation of the National Integrated Protected Areas (Nipas) law.

Acting Assistant City Legal Officer Santos Torrena said the plantation, which is owned by Skyline Farmers Cooperative represented by Julius Mejos, is covered by the Nipas law under the category of natural parks.

In his legal opinion, Torrena said section 20 of the Nipas law prohibits any commercial activity within the protected area except those allowed by the law.

Torrena also said there was already a directive issued by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) for the conservation and protection of the Mt. Apo Natural Park.

The directive has refrained farmers from expanding the banana plantation, to use only environment-friendly pesticides and fertilizers duly certified by the Fertilizer and Pesticides Authority, and that only activities in support of park conservation is allowed like tree planting on steep slopes.

The DENR has also asked farmers to submit a project proposal or development plan for deliberation and consideration of the Protected Area Management Board.

But even with the findings of violations of the plantation, the City Legal Office has, however, recommended that the mayor forward to the DENR the city council resolution for the strict implementation of the Nipas law.

The resolution, which was approved by the city council last year, recommends to the mayor the issuance of an order to stop the operation of the banana plantation of Mejos.

Torrena said the city legal office was reluctant to recommend to Mayor Rodrigo Duterte the issuance of the order because the authority to manage protected areas lies with the DENR.

Torrena said the city legal office is apprehensive that the mayor might be encroaching on the duties and authorities of the DENR if he issued an order to stop the plantation's operations.

Earlier the Water Management Coordinating Council yesterday raised concerns that despite an order to stop operations, the plantation continues to operate. *PDI Mindanao Bureau*

3 farmers get 120 years' jail term each for housemaid's rape

BACOLOD CITY—Three farmers on Monday were each sentenced to 120 years imprisonment for taking turns in raping an 18-year-old housemaid.

Judge Roberto Chiongson of the Bacolod Regional Trial Court also ordered Anhali Tibor Postrano, and brothers Gerardo and Jesus Dacal-dacal to pay the victim P75,000 in indemnity.

Postrano, 22, had denied raping the complainant. Gerardo, 25 and Jesus, 39 claimed they paid P500 for the sexual intercourse they had with her.

Upon hearing of the verdict, the victim wept. She expressed her gratitude to her employer who helped her pursue the case against the three.

Court records showed that the three men, who came from a drinking session, took turns in raping the victim in a camote plantation at Sitio Cabiguhan, Barangay Bago, Don Salvador Benedicto town, 42 km east of Bacolod, on Nov. 3, 2002.

The victim said Postrano first raped her. Jesus took his turn followed by Gerardo, she added.

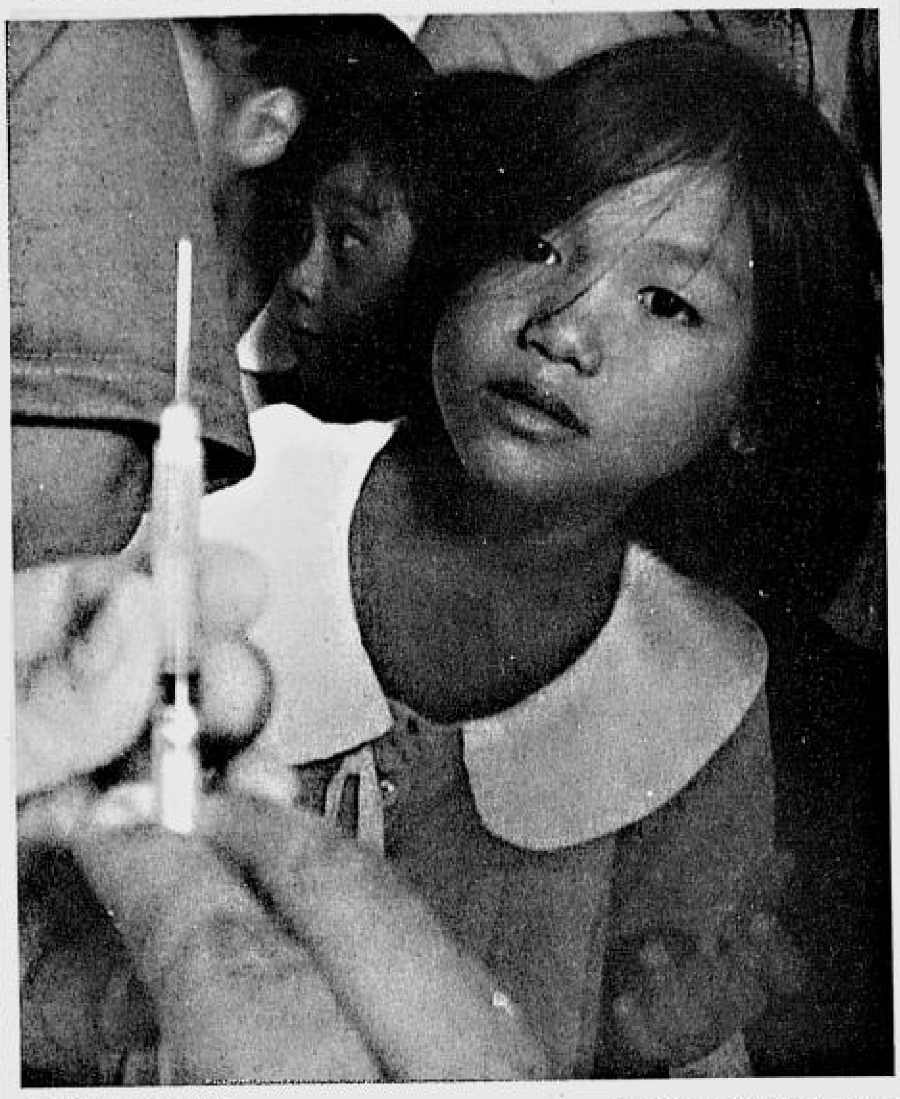
In his decision, Chiongson did not give credence to the testimony of the accused, saying these were "desperate and shameless prevarications that should not only be outrightly discarded but should be roundly and unconditionally condemned."

"Men who trivialize the honor and dignity of a woman to save their skins are miserable misfits undeserving of respect and sympathy," he added.

The judge noted that the three accused had a drinking spree before raping the victim.

"The liquor that they so freely imbibed heightened their lust and loosened their restraint. They were hungry beasts on a prowl for a prey," he said.

Chiongson said the victim's nightmarish experience was exacerbated by her being falsely branded as a prostitute. *Carla P. Gomez, PDI Visayas Bureau*



APPREHENSION BING GONZALES/PDI MINDANAO BUREAU

An injection needle presents itself as an object of curiosity and apprehension to a child who would soon feel its prick on her skin. The child is one of many who had to be vaccinated against measles in a program of the health department.

8 communist rebels slain in clashes

DAVAO CITY—At least eight New People's Army (NPA) rebels were killed in two separate clashes in Southern Mindanao, the military reported yesterday.

Brig. Gen. Alexander Yano, 601st Army Brigade commander, said that on Monday morning, six rebels were slain during a gunfight with elements of the Army's 25th Infantry Battalion in Barangay Dongan-Pikong in Matanao, Davao del Sur.

Yano said the soldiers were patrolling Sitio Bantung to verify the reported presence of communist rebels when they encountered some 50 NPA guerrillas.

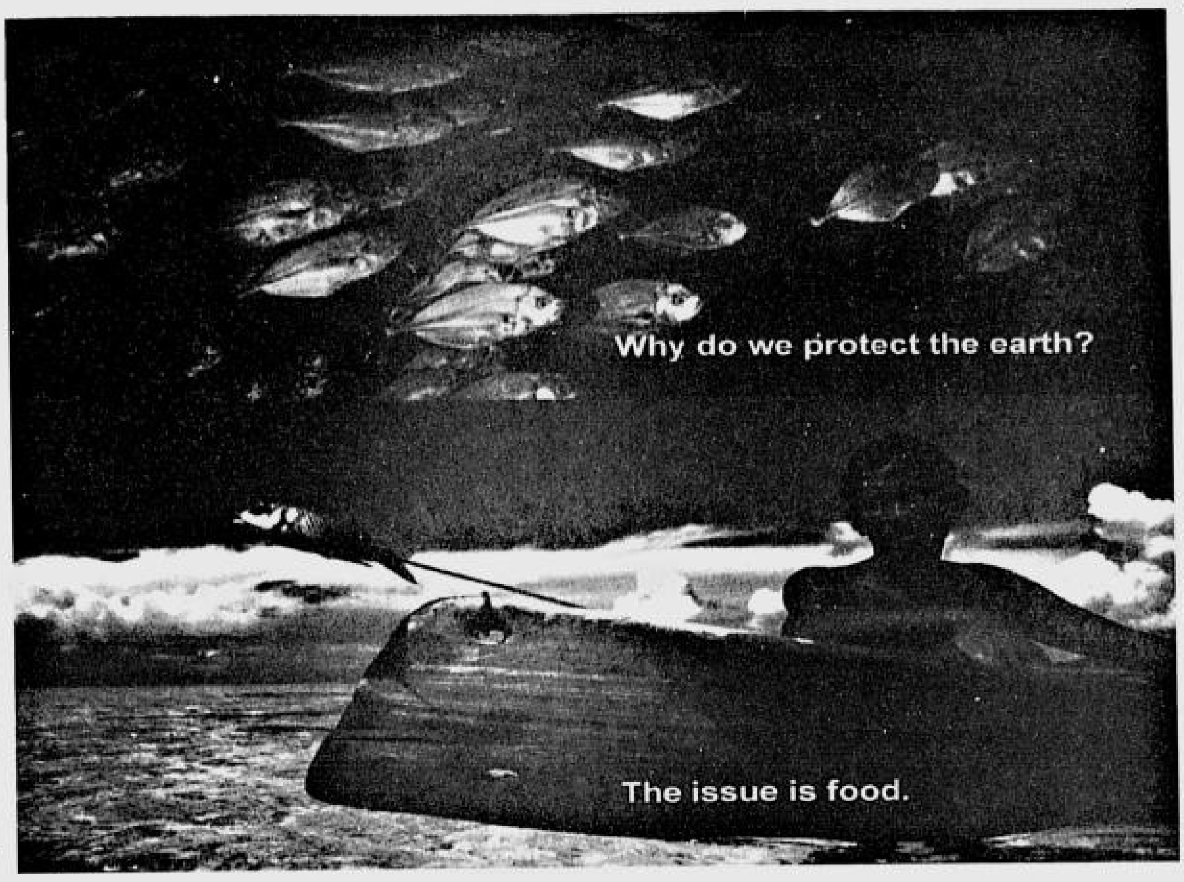
During the clash, Yano said a soldier, identified as Cpl. Franklin Ganiwan, was hit in the right leg.

He admitted that none of the slain rebels' bodies had been recovered because their comrades dragged them away.

"The figure was based on body counts. My men saw at least six slain communist rebels being dragged by their colleagues while withdrawing toward the forested area," Yano said.

Yano said the military believes more rebels were wounded during the fight.

During clearing operations, Yano said the soldiers recovered a Garand rifle and at least nine shotguns. *Dennis Jay C. Santos and Aquiles Z. Zonio, PDI Mindanao Bureau*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INQUIRER

Fishermen go high tech to increase catch

By Gia Damaso-Dumo
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

LUNA, La Union—Overfishing, caused by the growing number of fishermen in La Union and other provinces along the Lingayen Gulf, is pushing small fishermen farther and farther into the open sea to earn a living or simply feed their families on a daily basis.

So fierce has been the competition that even small fishermen are learning to invest in high-technology gadgets in order to cover more and deeper fishing grounds.

The gadget is a GPS (global positioning system), which was first developed for military use and can now be used by anybody for free.

A GPS is a space-based navigation system used for determining one's precise location and providing a highly accurate time reference almost anywhere on earth.

A GPS unit receives time signal transmissions from multiple satellites, and calculates its position by triangulating this data.

First developed in 1973 as a joint United States Air Force, Navy, Marine Corps and Defense Mapping Agency (DMA) project, its primary military purpose was to improve the control of forces through an enhanced ability to specify target locations for cruise missiles or troops.

Today, the system is used to help navigate airplanes, ships and cars. Handheld receivers are used by mountain climbers, hikers, glider pilots, and yes, "ordinary" fishermen.

The village of Darigayos in Luna town is one of the villages with the highest number of fishermen who encountered the freak weather phenomenon over the South China Sea on Jan. 23. The sudden changes in wind strength and big waves resulted in the deaths of at least six fishermen, with 18 still unaccounted for, and the loss of livelihood for hundreds of others.

In Darigayos, a group of at least nine fishermen are considered by their peers to be "luckier" than the rest of them because each of them owned a GPS unit.

Francisco Casipit, a barangay councilman and operator of four fishing boats, told the INQUIRER that he was the first fisherman in the village to own one. He has been using his Magellan GPS, an Australian brand, for the past several years after he discovered that mobile phones were useless at sea once the boat goes farther than 10 km from the shore.

It was Casipit who encouraged his boatmen to learn to use the gadget to mark their "payao" (defined by the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources as an aggregating device for fish) in the deep sea and, soon, the use of this technology caught on. The most commonly used brands here are Magellan and Garmin, made in Germany.

Fred Nantes, 38, brother of one of the still missing fishermen, said he relies heavily on his GPS unit, which he bought for P12,000 from a relative who came from Hong Kong in 1998.

"Kapag may GPS, madaling hanapin ang payao, araw man o gabi, at kahit umuulan. Kaya dire-diretso ang takbo ng bangka namin (It's easy to locate your payao, at day or at night or even through heavy rains, if you have a GPS unit. That's why we do not encounter delays in our fishing trips)," he said.

Another fisherman said it was very easy to find their way home with the help of the GPS, which was always accurate. He bought his unit only days ago for P10,000 in San Fernando City, he said.

Council standoff on new budget delays salaries of 600 workers

ANGELES CITY—At least 600 contractual and casual employees of the city government have not received their salaries since the start of the year because of the delay in the passage of the 2004 city budget.

The employees have been complaining about the lengthy debates at the city council about this year's proposed P421-million budget. They said the debates have made it more difficult for their families to make ends meet.

Alberto Suller, city administrator, said only regular or permanent employees of the city government have been receiving their salaries. He said the contractual and casual employees would have to wait until the council approves the new budget.

Mayor Carmelo Lazatin has been blaming the opposition councilors, who compose the council's majority bloc, for the delay in the budget approval.

Vice Mayor Ricardo Zalamea and Councilor Rodolfo Simeon promised to urge their colleagues to pass the proposed budget as soon as possible. They said prolonged debates are not good for the employees and the city.

Earlier, officials of the city-owned Ospital Ning Angeles (ONA) said the hospital's stocks are good only until the end of this month. ONA Director Eduardo Buencamino said medical and other supplies have started to be depleted and could not be replaced until the 2004 city budget is approved.

But opposition Councilor Ireneo Alvaro, majority floor leader in the city council, defended his group's effort to scrutinize the proposed budget.

While admitting that the city council's committee on finance and appropriations, which is controlled by his group, started reviewing the proposed budget only last December, he said the committee could not proceed with the review without supporting documents.

Alvaro also cited a new government accounting procedure that requires the council to be more careful in studying proposed budgets. He said even lump sum appropriations are no longer allowed under the new rules.

He said the proposed 2004 budget allocates only six-month maintenance and operating expenses for regular offices. "This is not right. Each office should be assured of one-year allocations for their maintenance and operating expenses. This example only proves that there are a lot of matters that should be examined in the proposed budget," he said.

However, several City Hall employees are not convinced about Alvaro's explanation.

"While they debate and debate (on the budget), we suffer. Our families are suffering," said an employee. *Jun Malig, PDI Central Luzon Desk*

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INQUIRER Northern Luzon

Editor Jun Bandayrel
Bureau Chief Rolando B. Fernandez

TEST-TUBE CARABAOS

Twin calves follow 'Erap, Fidel, Cory'

By Anselmo Roque
Science City of Muñoz

THE BIRTH of the first twin calves at the Philippine Carabao Center (PCC) at the Science City of Muñoz has boosted the number of test-tube carabaos whose embryos were produced in another country.

It has also increased the hope of PCC scientists in perfecting the technique for producing the animal breed at a faster rate.

The twins, both males, were born on Jan. 16 at the PCC barn two hours apart of each other. The elder weighed 26 kilograms and the younger, a little heavier at 28.4 kg.

They were products of what is technically known as "in vitro-derived vitrified embryo method," which is a first in the world for water buffaloes. The embryos were "assembled" in India and flown in cryo-preserved state two years ago.

The birth of the calves under this method is the first in the world. It is only in the Philippines where the method is being used, and scientists in other countries are now raring to study it.

There are now 12 such test-tube carabaos, three of them owned by the farmers and the rest are being raised at the PCC compound. All are of the Murrah buffalo breed.

'Glory'

The first among them was Glory, which was born on April 5, 2002. It weighed 44 kg at birth and was at once described by scientists as a "top-of-the-line" local-born water buffalo that could produce 14 liters of milk.

The laboratory-developed embryo of Glory was from the sperm cell of a top Murrah bull in India and from an egg of a slaughtered female Murrah buffalo also in India.

Glory, named after President Macapagal-Arroyo whose birthday is April 5, was followed by the birth of a female and four male calves.

They were named Erap, Fidel, Cory, Liberty and Pat. The first three were named after the three presidents who contributed much in the carabao development program in the country, while Liberty was named after Dr. Libertado Cruz, PCC executive director.

Pat was named after Dr. Patricio Faylon, director of the Philippine Council for Agriculture, Forestry, Natural Resources Research and Development (Pcarrd).

Their surrogate mothers are Bulgarian buffaloes at the PCC gene pool. The other three were born from their surrogate native mother carabaos owned by farmers in San Jose City and Cabanatuan City. They were named Sharma, Irfan and Shuttari, after Indian personalities who supported the project.

PCC officials are still trying to determine what names should be given to the twin calves, plus another calf born two days after them.

Bright prospect

The naming of the calves after prominent people, PCC scientists explained, was a way of honoring them for their tremendous assistance to the program of improving the carabao breed in the country.

The carabao industry in the country, they said, offers a bright prospect in improving the economic life of the people.

Not counting their value in farm work, carabaos can contribute much in terms of milk, meat and hide. In the importation of milk and milk products alone, the country spent a yearly average of $400 million from 1992 to 1999, for an average total of 1.43 billion liters of milk a year.

All 12 test-tube carabaos born recently were produced using almost the same procedure employed in the original test-tube carabaos, Malakas and Maganda. The only difference was that the embryos of Malakas and Maganda were fresh.

Malakas and Maganda were born here on Oct. 28 and Nov. 21, 1996, respectively. One of them died in a freak accident a few months after its birth.

Danilda Duran, coordinator of the PCC biotechnology laboratory, said the current technique in test-tube carabaos had vastly improved from the 1996 technique due to a breakthrough scored by Dr. Prudencio Pedro, a member of the PCC's reproductive biotechnology team.

Pedro's research was the ultra rapid vitrification (or cryo-preservation) of embryos.

Although there is much elation about the birth of the twin calves out of the embryo transfer technique, scientists at the PCC have guarded optimism in producing more twin test-tube carabaos. In fact, producing a single-birth test-tube carabao is yet far from ideal in terms of success rate.

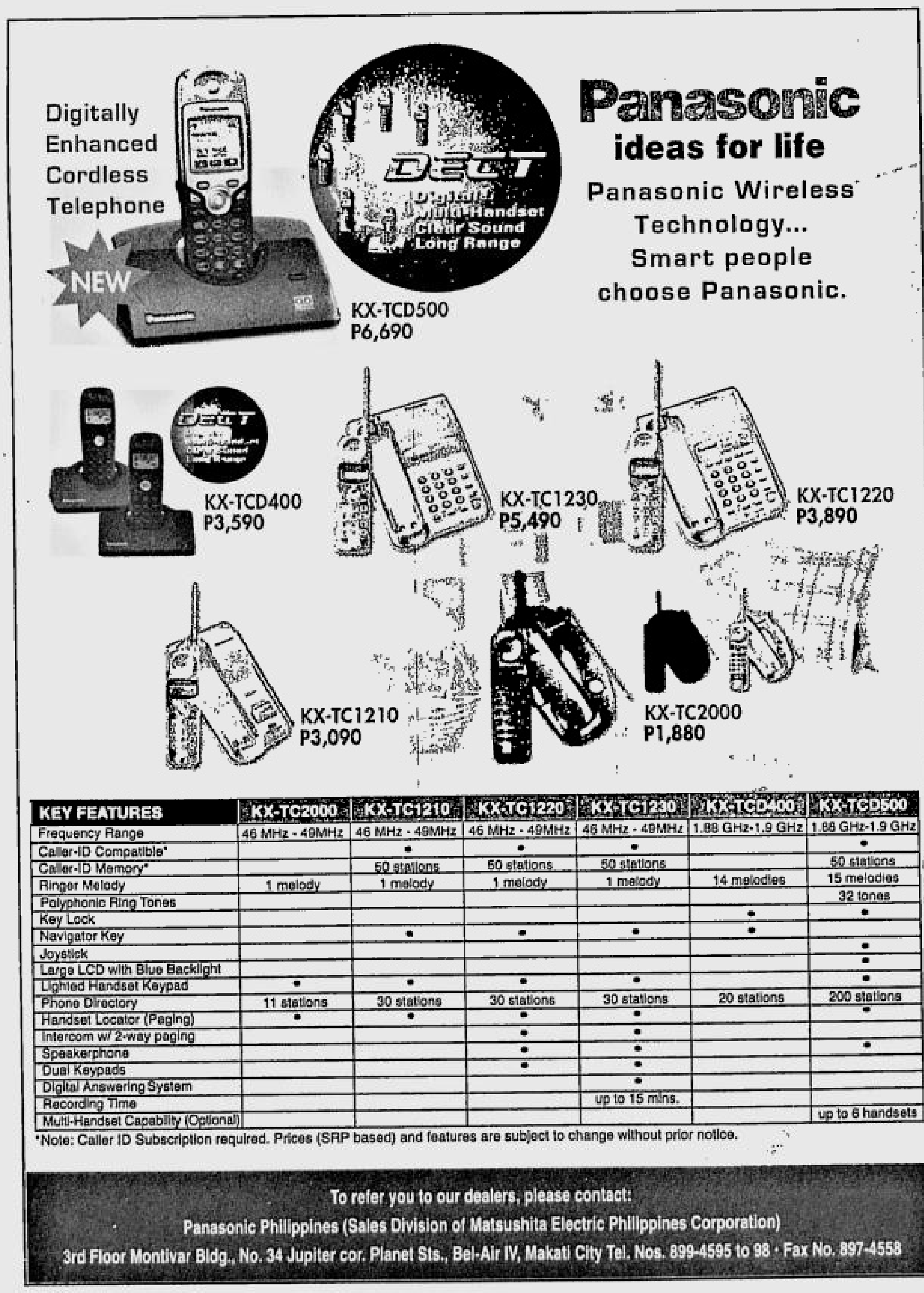
"We are still doing lots of studies about this reproductive biotechnique. We are taking into account many factors, and we need more equipment and facilities," said Duran.

She said the success rate, so far, has only been 11 percent. It is still lower than the artificial insemination method, which has a success rate of 20 percent, she said. Both techniques, though, are still considered low in animal reproduction.

But Duran said the technique was already good and very promising in the production of pure-bred Murrah buffaloes.

Importation of quality dairy water buffaloes, she said, was cumbersome and very expensive. Quality buffaloes, she added, were needed for the establishment of a viable dairy enterprise in the country.

DR. LIBERTADO Cruz (left), executive director of Philippine Carabao Center, and his embryo transfer team present the world's only twin test-tube carabaos. ANSELMO S. ROQUE



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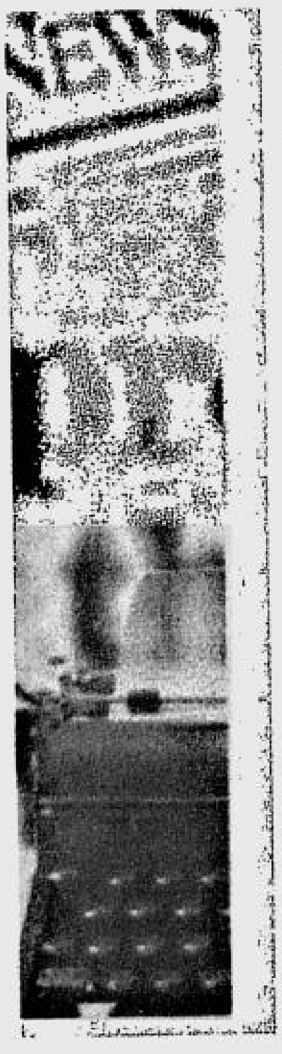
The media 'underclass' speaks

By Tonette Orejas
Clark Special Economic Zone



ON MEDIA ethics, a male radio broadcaster from Mindanao said, "*Itinatabi namin 'yan* (We ignore it)." His colleague, a woman, was more blunt: "*Dito lang 'yan* (It's only raised here)."

The adjectives went the range of the unprintable when the journalists described the conduct of some of their colleagues and the kinds of tirades hurled at the programs, at least on radio, in various parts of Mindanao, where several reporters were murdered last year.

"Bombastic" has been the style of commentators, as this is the best way to develop avid listeners and up the ratings, they said.

Increased rating is a way to fend off the threats of closure that their Manila offices often dangle when the income quota is not met. Reporters, in this setting, double up as account executives.

In the provinces, another reporter found out, the news has become an absolute commodity, tacitly offered to candidates as an election campaign tool. Politicians are able to buy block time for self-glorification or to vilify an opponent.

The woes of provincial journalists working for local and national news organizations did not stop there. They cited low pay, no fixed salaries to even speak of, scarce protection, nil or no benefits at all and inadequate training.

All these considered, including the malpractice by public relations practitioners in the government and private sectors, the vulnerability or submission to media corruption is as clear as day.

Provincial journalists are, by their own reckoning, the "underclass" in the sector of media workers because the standards, terms and conditions accorded them are several times inferior to what prevail in the largely Metro Manila-based media industry.

Media Nation

The venue for this speaking out was the three-day Media Nation summit last week. When provincial journalists spoke of their plight, needs and views, they enriched what the summit's convenor, pagbabago@pilipinas member Mario Taguiwalo, called an occasion for self-reflection.

Nicholas Nugent of British Broadcasting Corp. called this as an exercise in introspection on the social functions, power, responsibility, profit making, behavior and practices of the media.

The statements of provincial journalists made it to the level of policymakers because the summit was, as Taguiwalo put it, an unprecedented gathering of top news media personalities and news organizations.

Where exactly provincial journalists fall into the whole scheme of efforts to correct malpractices and excesses, and to assert the right and duty in the relay of information and truth has yet to be seen.

But surely, efforts are ongoing to reverse the situation, the summit's organizers and participants said. They said the public should expect better treatment and a better media for the nation.

The dialogue, said Taguiwalo, was "not a venue for shallow generalizations."

"If we gather merely to air tired declarations about sensationalism, commercialization, corruption or incompetence, then we are not worthy of the observational powers, critical thinking and creative expression that mark the best of media practice," he said.

Peso sinks to 56.20 to US dollar

From page A1

sponsible policies."

In a worst case scenario, SCB said: "The country's poor fiscal position leads to concerns over the government's ability to fund the budget deficit. This in turn leads to speculation that the government will be forced to print money and thus the PHP (peso) depreciates sharply.

"The level of external debt as a percentage of gross domestic product soars and a debt spiral develops. Financial markets start to demand a much higher risk premium on the country's foreign debt and this undermines the government's fiscal position further," the European bank said.

Gradual creep

A treasury official from another foreign bank said that the peso would weaken to P57 between now and mid-March.

"It would be a gradual creep up to P57. The market would be tentative for the meantime after hitting a new low. But we would test the P56.30 today," he said.

The bank official said only a massive selling of dollars by the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) could prevent the peso from hitting bottom.

"The direction of the peso would depend on the BSP. It must come in a big way, like sell $200 million to reverse the trend and to calm down the market," the bank official said.

Non-stop risks

"The market is very uneasy because of the non-stop event risks. The peso is falling even when there is no corporate demand which usually happens at the end of the month," another trader said.

Traders spotted the BSP selling only about $20 million yesterday but no amount of BSP intervention could arrest the peso's plunge. Turnover reached $131.3 million. The peso opened at P56.09, its highest level yesterday and closed at the lowest level.

BSP Deputy Governor Amando Tetangco Jr. denied that the central bank sold dollars but said that monetary authorities were watchful of the situation.

"We will continue to experience volatility until the elections. But we believe the peso would recover after May," Tetangco said.

Political circus

BSP Governor Rafael Buenaventura said the political circus had weakened the peso by about P5.

"We are paying a premium of about P5 on political uncertainties. The peso should only be about P12 weaker compared to the Thai baht but the differential had widened to about P17," the BSP chief said. The baht is about 39 to a dollar.

Major regional currencies like the Japanese yen and the Thai baht rallied yesterday.

The BSP said the peso would average P56 this year from P54.50 in 2003. So far, the peso had shed 4 percent of its value since the start of the year.

Capital flight

Foreign investors have been buying back the dollars they sold last month on account of the political jitters in the runup to the elections, according to a trader.

The jitters have been caused by rumored destabilization plots and the emergence of Fernando Poe Jr., an actor with no experience in government service, as the front runner in the presidential race, according to investment analysts.

Foreign investors placed their bets on the peso at the start of the year and sold about $300 million so they could invest in local stocks and securities. A trader said these investors still have to buy back about $150 million to $200 million.

Supporting this observation is the premium that offshore investors pay just to buy back the dollars they sold earlier. A treasury official said that yesterday, the offshore premium was already 20 centavos or almost double that of the previous week. In effect, these investors were buying dollars at P56.40.

"I won't describe this as capital flight because the best evidence of capital flight is when the black market is trading at a premium over the spot market. So far, this has not happened. The big premium we see is on the offshore market so this means that only the foreign investors are moving out, not the local-based investors, particularly the Chinese-Filipinos," the treasury official explained.

Tighter monitoring

BSP Deputy Governor Alberto Reyes said that from now until the elections, the central bank would be tightly monitoring foreign exchange transactions to discourage currency speculation.

"We are closely reviewing reports of banks, particularly their forex position. But so far, we have not seen evidence of speculation," Reyes said.

Even the number of examiners conducting on-spot audit on banks had been doubled. "From the usual five to seven examiners, we are doubling the members of each team conducting audit on banks with high volume of dollar transactions," he said.

Last week, the Monetary Board had instructed the BSP to strictly slap fines and administrative penalties especially on banks found repeatedly violating foreign exchange rules.

Splitting

"We will suspend the foreign exchange licenses of banks incurring more than three violations. The most common violation is splitting and so we are very watchful," Reyes warned.

To circumvent a BSP order requiring banks to fully document transactions worth $5,000 and above, banks split dollar purchases especially when it has no accompanying documents.

"We could suspend banks officers and directors. We could also suspend their foreign exchange licenses. There are many administrative sanctions we could impose," Buenaventura earlier said.

In the past, the BSP either raised its overnight rates or banks' reserve requirement to prop up the peso. But Buenaventura said that instead of using economic tools, the government must restore "sobriety on the political front" to avert any further damage to the local currency.

Erosion of credit worthiness

In the study, SCB said the new government could also "fail to lead to a sharp improvement in the fiscal position, either due to its own policies or due to the inefficiencies in the policy-making process, and we see a continued gradual erosion in the country's credit-worthiness."

SCB said that with an alternative administration, "the general perception" was that these two scenarios would become more likely.

"This illustrates what is potentially at stake in this election—something reinforced by Moody's decision to play catch-up with ourselves and other rating agencies by cutting its rating by one notch and retaining a negative credit-rating outlook. If this is not enough to make the markets nervous, I do not know what is," it said.

SCB said this could be averted if the new government pushes ahead with reforms to cut the budget deficit, trim down the level of public sector debt as a percentage of GDP (from over 80 percent closer to the 'safety threshold' of 60 percent), and reduce its reliance on foreign currency borrowings to improve the country's credit-rating.

"If (President Macapagal-) Arroyo wins, her desire to leave a legacy may make this the most likely scenario," SCB said.

Pro-reform legacy

SCB noted that while the President had been largely ineffective in terms of pushing ahead with reform, " she has a great desire to leave behind a pro-reform legacy."

"While this clearly does not guarantee success given the shenanigans that are always present in the Senate, it does mean she would likely be more focused in a second term than she was in the first. Also, as an elected leader, rather than a leader by default, she would likely become more confident in her mandate," SCB said.

On Ms Macapagal's strongest rival, Poe, SCB said: "There are far too many uncertainties to judge the efficacy of a government under his leadership with no indication of what policies he would pursue or who would be in his Cabinet."

"There is still time to act but the clock is ticking," SCB said. "The government is making the right noises, but not delivering the results. This needs to change. Hopefully, after the election it will." *With a report from Reuters*

'Don't cry for me Argentina'

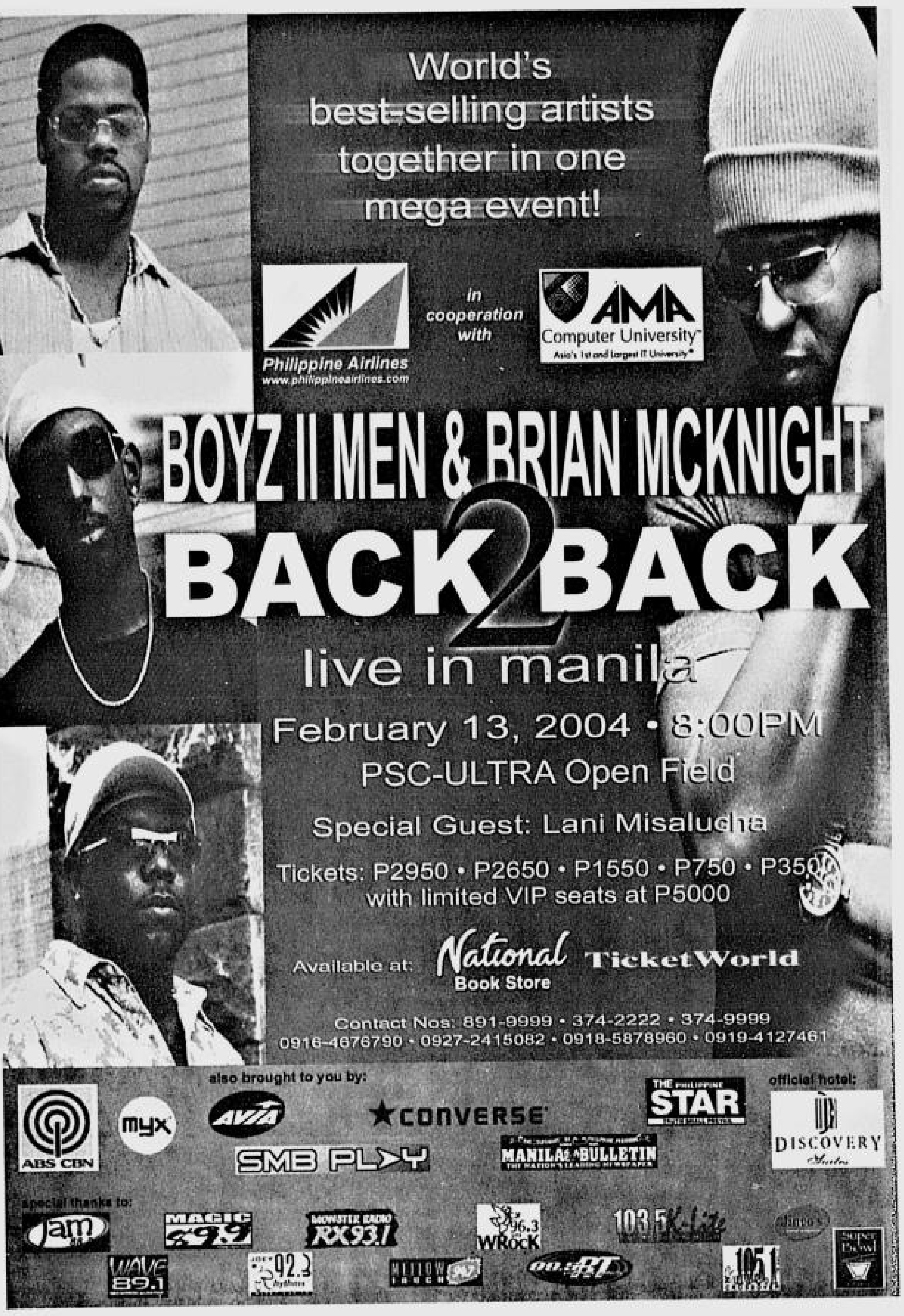
ARGENTINA defaulted on its $88 billion debt in January 2002.

The month before, withdrawals were restricted to halt a flight of deposits from the banking system. Riots ensued, forcing the president and his economic minister to resign. Political chaos ensued as a succession of presidents assumed office briefly.

The Argentinian peso was floated in February, 2002. This led the exchange rate to plunge, inflation to pick up and output to collapse. The Argentinian economy contracted by 11 percent and unemployment rose to more than 20 percent.

The collapse led to political and social turmoil. It left more than half of the Argentinians living in poverty. *By PDI Research*

STUDENTS of the University of the Sto.Tomas hug Raul Roco who spoke during a school program designed for students to meet the presidential candidates. ERIK ARAZAS



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IMPORTANT ADVISORY
TO ALL PLANHOLDERS OF
PACIFIC PLANS, INC.

Effective February 2, 2004, in compliance with BIR requirements, Pacific Plans has implemented a new Cash Receipt System for collections, which incorporates the use of PROVISIONAL RECEIPTS.

Our Company Agents and Cashiers shall issue PROVISIONAL RECEIPTS when receiving payments from Planholders. Computerized OFFICIAL RECEIPTS shall subsequently be mailed directly by Pacific Plans to the Planholders.

The new PROVISIONAL RECEIPTS shall contain the following:
- ➢ Addresses of branches where Pacific Plans' Agents are affiliated
- ➢ TIN of the Pacific Plans' Branch

As part of the transition procedures that will allow compliance with the above-cited BIR requirements, Pacific Plans will continue to accept old OFFICIAL RECEIPTS issued by our Company Agents until February 29, 2004.

Effective March 1, 2004, Pacific Plans' Planholders must only accept PROVISIONAL RECEIPTS from their Agents, as Company Cashiers will no longer accept the old OFFICIAL RECEIPTS issued after the said date.

PACIFIC PLANS
A YGC Member

It is now up to high court to decide Poe citizenship

From page A1

Comelec en banc resolution, dismissing the motion for lack of merit. Four of the seven commissioners had already signed it, he said.

The resolution, however, was not certified by Comelec Chair Benjamin Abalos.

Showing his copy to reporters, Pimentel asked the Comelec to immediately release the resolution, "to allay fears of the public that something is being cooked up in Comelec."

"Why delay it, considering that majority of the commissioners already signed?" Pimentel added.

Abalos surprised

But Abalos expressed surprise that there was already such a resolution, and that copies were circulating in the Senate.

"I don't know where that came from. We've just ordered the parties to submit their memorandums tomorrow," he said in a phone interview.

Abalos said the commission had just wrapped up its deliberations on the issue and the consensus was that they should wait for the Supreme Court decision on the case.

"We're ready to vote, although we would still like to look at the memos to see if there's any new argument," he added.

Abalos said he had tasked the Comelec's legal department to meet the Supreme Court's order to file a comment.

"If the comment is finished within the week and we decide on the (Poe) case within the week, we'll attach our decision to the comment," he said.

Poe lawyer berated

The tactics of Poe's lawyer caused Abalos to lose his temper yesterday.

The chair berated former Solicitor General Estelito Mendoza, who also served as lawyer for President Joseph Estrada in his impeachment trial, for allegedly driving a wedge between the Comelec appointees of Estrada and those of President Macapagal-Arroyo.

Mendoza was asked to explain before the commission en banc why the Poe camp asked for a hearing, then withdrew the motion at the last minute, and then insinuated in media that the retirement of two Estrada appointees would affect the Comelec's decision.

"It is unfair. The insinuation is quite unfair, as if the voting depends on the appointing power, coming from you," Abalos said during the hearing.

'Party in interest'

The session was held to hear Fornier's motion for reconsideration. It was supposed to have been held last Friday, as proposed by Poe's lawyers, but it was canceled by the same lawyers on Thursday, because they said they would want the case resolved before the two commissioners—Estrada appointees Luzviminda Tancangco and Ralph Lantion—retired.

Yesterday, Mendoza told the commission's remaining five members that he had wanted an early resolution, before the President appointed two new commissioners.

Mendoza said that since Tancangco was one of the three commissioners who voted for dismissal, he felt that she would have maintained her position in the present case.

He added that "irrespective of how we see it," the problem is that Ms Macapagal is a "party in interest" and if Poe is disqualified, that would make her a leading candidate.

"She is effectively a party in interest. This should be decided before the appointments are made," Mendoza said.

Abalos, in the same hearing, countered and said that Poe can always go to the Supreme Court.

Irked

"Your statement is uncalled for... Don't ever entertain (the idea) that I'll vote in favor (of Ms Macapagal merely because she appointed me)," Abalos said, apparently irked.

Fornier said he still believed in the integrity of the Comelec, pointing out that "not all the appointees of Marcos were loyal to him, not all voted in favor of Marcos."

At the end of the verbal exchange, the commission asked the parties to hand over their respective memoranda in place of the oral arguments and submit the case for resolution.

Both parties agreed to the proposal, setting the stage for a possible decision this week.

No jurisdiction

In their petition before the high court, Tecson and Desiderio argued that the Comelec had admitted that it has no jurisdiction over the issue of Poe's citizenship, leading the two to elevate the matter to the high court.

The two stressed that because Poe was an illegitimate child, his nationality follows the American citizenship of his American mother Bessie Kelley.

Not qualified

The petitioners asked the high court to prevent the Comelec from recognizing the candidacy of Poe, set aside the Comelec' previous decision on Poe's case, declare that Poe was not a natural-born Filipino and therefore not qualified to run for President, and remove Poe's name from the list of qualified candidates for President.

Velez asked the high court to take jurisdiction over the issue of Poe's citizenship, saying it was only the high tribunal that can settle the issue on whether Poe is a natural-born citizen. He also stressed that Poe was an illegitimate child who acquired the citizenship of his American mother at birth. *With a report from Christine Avendaño*

FPJ admits love child

From page A1

yon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino in the forthcoming elections, admitted this much last night in an interview by broadcast journalist Jessica Soho in GMA-7's "Bio-Data."

Rumors about the actor's love child have been something of an "open secret" in show biz circles for years, but last night was the first time that FPJ publicly owned up. Ron-An (pronounced "Ron-yan") Poe, said to be 22 years old, is a college student in De La Salle University on Taft Avenue.

It was a "very brief" exchange, according to Soho, who said she was given just a few minutes with the subject. Poe answered the question about his illegitimate child without hesitation.

"You don't deny it?" Soho asked in Filipino.

"No, I don't," FPJ answered, also in Filipino. "That is true."

The actor, who has been leading President Macapagal-Arroyo in opinion polls, has no child by his wife, actress Susan Roces, whom he married in December 1968. The couple have an adopted daughter, Mary Grace, now married and living in the United States.

Opponents say last night's admission dealt a blow to Poe's hopes of presenting an image of clean living, presumably a requirement of the largely Catholic electorate, especially since the official campaign period starts in a week.

Pressed if the relationship with Marin still existed, Poe told Soho: "Ah, *wala, matagal na* (no, not for a long time now)."

An older, but still persistent, rumor refers to an older son allegedly by another starlet in the late 1950s or early 1960s before his marriage to Susan Roces.

"It's part of the past, and I answer for that (sic)," the actor described "that chapter" of his life with Marin. Then he swiftly cut short that portion of the interview: "Okay, I have to go."

The Agence France-Presse tried, but failed, to reach Poe for comment. His spokesperson Rod Reyes denied he knew for sure about the Marin episode. "That is a revelation," he told AFP. "I was hearing something to that effect, but if he admitted it, it is a good (move) on his part."

Poe, a high-school dropout whose lack of government experience and economic program has worried the business community, is running mainly on his show biz popularity. He is called "The King of Philippine Movies."

He is a close friend of deposed President Joseph Estrada, a self-confessed womanizer and drinker who admits siring several children out of wedlock.

Critics warn that Poe would probably end up like his friend, but Poe himself has said on several occasions that he's his own man and no clone of Estrada's.

Anna Marin—shown in an old photo (see Page A1) from the personal collection of PDI Chief Librarian Medy Gregorio—seems to be on a "comeback" trail, with a stage job as alternate performer in a sex-comedy presentation this weekend at the Music Museum in Greenhills, San Juan. Media dispatches about the show say Marin's appearance is a "surprise."

Indeed.

Political prostitutes? Who's not?

From page A1

tion letter, he said he was making a "knight's sacrifice" to save the "Queen," meaning President Macapagal-Arroyo.

Corpus had earlier accused Legarda—a former stalwart of the ruling Lakas-CMD who is now the running mate of opposition presidential candidate Fernando Poe Jr.—of playing all sides of the political spectrum in order to strengthen her hold on political power.

Reprimanded

A report in another newspaper quoted Corpus as saying that Legarda had been meeting with Pastor Saycon, the alleged ringleader of the "Kawal Pilipino" that had been tagged as engaging in destabilization efforts.

No-no

Corpus has since been reprimanded by Armed Forces Chief of Staff Gen. Narciso Abaya for making an "irresponsible statement against a duly elected government official," and Legarda has demanded a public apology from him.

But no such thing is forthcoming.

"That public apology is a no-no for me because I was already reprimanded. That's up to the authorities of the Armed Forces. I was already given an oral and written reprimand for using foul language," Corpus told reporters yesterday.

"I will be breaking my word to my bosses because I promised not to give public statements anymore," he added.

Ms Macapagal's spokesperson Ignacio Bunye said Malacañang was standing by Abaya's reprimand of Corpus.

"He can explain directly to the chief of staff. And we agree with the action taken by the chief of staff," Bunye said in a radio interview.

Off the record

Corpus refused to reply to reporters' questions in connection with his remark against Legarda unless he could speak "off the record."

Asked if he regretted airing the controversial description of the senator, he said: "Off the record, I can talk freely."

But he suggested that his remark had been misconstrued as a political statement: I was already reprimanded for expressing my feelings in public, which I'm not supposed to [do] because it might be interpreted that I'm engaging in politics." To the question of why generals like himself got off the hook easily despite the commission of infractions, Corpus remained mum. But he said: "If it's off the record, I'll answer that."

The general, a 1969 graduate of the Philippine Military Academy who once defected to the communist movement, is due for retirement this year. He declined to answer when asked if he would resign because of the controversy.

'Charge him'

But Saycon, who is secretary general of the Council of Philippine Affairs, challenged Corpus to resign "for tarnishing the AFP."

"I could not accept his unbecoming statement, calling an elected official of the land a prostitute," Saycon said at a press conference.

"What can the citizenry expect from the AFP if their spokesperson has no manners and no breeding?" he added angrily.

Saycon said the administration should not let Corpus off easily.

"Why don't they charge Corpus for insulting an elected official?" he said, adding that as Commander in Chief of the military, Ms Macapagal should reprimand the general.

"With this incident, I can see how the government singles out its opponents," he said.

Legarda is a first cousin of his wife's, Saycon said. But he did not meet with her before the young soldiers aired their grievances in the "Kawal Filipino" press conference late last month, he said.

He also said he did not own the house in Makati where the clandestine meeting with Legarda allegedly took place. *With reports from Margaux C. Ortiz and Juliet Labog-Javellana*

San Fernando feasts . . .

From page A1

was laid out end to end in this city yesterday and later distributed to the public for good luck.

Lolita Hizon, owner of Pampanga's Best, the maker of the meat product, said the entire stretch of longaniza contained 1,500 kilograms of ground pork, 210 kg of sugar, 50 kg of garlic, 3 kg of pepper, soy sauce and salt.

"Definitely, no *salitre* (potassium nitrate or any preservative)," said Hizon.

Prepared for 24 hours by 25 people until Monday, the longaniza she said cost more than P200,000 to make. They were still uncooked and stuffed in clean pig intestines on Tuesday.

Like a single chain, the longaniza were laid out on fresh banana leaves covering the straight row of tables arranged from City Hall and toward the end of Consunji Street.

Not for Guinness

This Pampanga's Best creation, as well as Tuesday's event, only sought to mark a local record, according to Mayor Reynaldo Aquino.

Aquino said the city government and longaniza makers were still not aspiring to beat the Guinness holder of the world's largest sausage, which spanned 59.14 km—the distance from Manila to Apalit town in Pampanga.

The world's longest sausage was created in Sheffield, South York in the United Kingdom on Oct. 27-29, 2000.

"We might (beat that record), but not yet now," Aquino said.

Tuesday's event, called the "First Longest Longaniza Festival," also celebrated the third year of San Fernando's cityhood. The first city declared by President Macapagal-Arroyo, San Fernando was carved out from Mexico and Bacolor towns. It is also marking its 250th founding anniversary this year.

Hundreds of people gathered on Consunji Street as early as 6 a.m. as the city government prepared to give out longaniza for good luck.

Aquino, a medical doctor, canceled the servings of *tocino*, the Kapampangan's version of sweet and sliced ham, after the low helicopter flight by an ABS-CBN camera crew caused the sand to swirl over the stage and display tables nearby.

Local taste

The local longaniza taste is a blend of sweet and sour, and a little bit spicy. They are sold in dozens of stalls at the old public market near City Hall.

The products of Pampanga's Best and other meat processing companies have been sold all over the country for the past decade, said Hizon.

The Pampanga Meat Producers Association is one of the biggest groups in the country. It counts nearly 100 members and the industry it supports has flourished into a multibillion-peso enterprise linked to agriculture.

Hizon, a public school teacher, began the business in 1967.

JDV: It's deadlocked, 2003 budget reenacted

From page A1

opened, freezing action on measures, especially local bills that congressmen want the Senate to approve.

Senate President Franklin Drilon told reporters that senators decided to adjourn early because senators failed to reach a consensus on how to address the problem caused by the House's desire for a reenacted 2003 budget this year.

Change mind

During the caucus, there were senators who wanted the chamber to accept the 2004 budget as proposed by the House. Other senators insisted that the budget proposal go through a bicameral conference committee while some wanted to push for the version of the 2004 budget as passed in the Senate, according to Drilon.

"Therefore, no consensus was arrived at," Drilon said at a news conference after senators met in a caucus that lasted for four hours. "At this time, there is still a deadlock."

By adjourning early, Majority Leader Francis Pangilinan said the Senate was sending "a message to the House that we are waiting for their decision to sit down in a bicameral conference committee."

Pangilinan expressed the hope the House would eventually change its mind.

With the Senate action, Sen. Ralph Recto is not optimistic that the 2004 budget will be passed, saying that Congress might have to settle for the reenacted budget.

No breakthrough

Rep. Rolando Andaya Jr. (LP, Camarines Sur), chair of the House appropriations committee, is not about to change his mind.

Andaya met his Senate counterpart, Sen. Manuel Villar, on Monday afternoon in an attempt to jump-start the deliberations by the joint congressional oversight committee on the budget. There was no breakthrough.

"We just formalized that we'll just have a deadlock on the matter instead of insisting that either they or we will be followed," he said. "We will go on with a reenacted 2003 budget."

He said the House passed the proposed 2004 budget last August on the premise that government revenue collection would improve.

But official revenue data for 2003, which became available in early January, showed that the government could not afford a P864.8-billion budget as previously proposed by Malacañang.

"The point is we need to lower the deficit," Andaya said. "It's not enough that we have a deficit problem."

Opposition Sen. Edgardo Angara believes the Senate should accept the 2004 budget as proposed by the House and pass the P5-billion supplemental budget earlier approved by the House. The supplemental budget contains funding for the May 10 elections and the salary increases for soldiers.

Angara said there would be time for Congress to act on this because a bicameral conference committee was not needed.

He underscored the need for Congress to pass the 2004 budget instead of settling for the reenacted 2003 budget.

"Why is the 2003 reenacted budget bad for us, especially an election year? Because the whole budget will now become one whole pork barrel. Many of the projects under the 2003 appropriations have already been completed or substantially completed and therefore funding will have to be released," Angara said.

Good as reenacted

He said the funds would be considered savings and "under our systems, savings can be realigned, reshuffled, juggled by the President. In an election year, that is going to be a disaster for our country because our administration would be able to buy the whole election."

In the House, De Venecia said the 2003 national budget would be effectively reenacted in the absence of cooperation from the Senate to pass the proposed supplemental budget for this year.

He said it was impossible for the House to accede to the Senate demand that it approve the 2004 budget without the supplemental budget for the salary increases for soldiers.

Asked what went wrong, De Venecia said the House merely wanted to stick by the smaller budget while the Senate was insisting on a bigger one.

Supplemental budget

Told that it was the House that submitted the 2004 budget to the Senate for approval, De Venecia said approval was made on the condition that the supplemental budget would be approved.

He also branded as irresponsible the opposition's charge that Malacañang wanted the budget reenacted to give President Macapagal-Arroyo a leeway in juggling funds for her campaign kitty.

"That's foolish! Whether it's 2003 or 2004 budget, the President has the constitutional power to make adjustment or realignment, especially of lump sum items," De Venecia said.

It's House vs Senate . . .

From page A1

Duff and Floro speak on Jan. 2 of an event that is supposed to have occurred on Jan. 10?"

The difference in the dates was a "very glaring discrepancy," Pichay said.

'Highly confidential'

"We must know what is the real purpose of these two in coming out against Manapat," Pichay said. "The discrepancy has cast doubt on the merit of their (Duff and Floro) affidavits."

Duff, a service supervisor at Florofoto, told the Senate committee on constitutional amendments on Monday that he was the one who put the microfilm rolls together last month on Manapat's orders.

Duff even said Floro had told him that Manapat did not want him to read the documents, numbering between 30 and 50, because they were "highly confidential."

He also said it was only when Manapat asked him to print copies of a birth certificate that he was able to read its contents. The certificate was that of Allan Poe's, the candidate's father, he said.

Microfilm record

Duff also said another roll of film contained a marriage contract between the elder Poe and Gomez. Floro corroborated Duff's testimony.

Pichay also scored senators for refusing to share with the House a copy of the microfilm record Manapat earlier furnished concerning documents related to Poe's citizenship.

"It's unfortunate because we can't demand it from the Senate because of inter-parliamentary courtesy," Pichay said.

The House yesterday resumed its hearings on the allegations that the Poe documents were allegedly tampered by Manapat.

Non-existent basis

Manapat did not show up at the hearing but Pichay said the presence of the former director of the National Archives was no longer required, because he had attended the first House hearing on the matter last week.

Angara lawyer Demaree Raval showed up at the hearing and said the documents supposedly used as basis of the microfilm records used against Poe were nonexistent.

Raval said he had secured official certification from the archives office that the paper documents on the supposed wedding of Poe's father to Gomez do not exist.

MMDA declares war on posters

By Margaux Ortiz

THE METROPOLITAN Manila Development Authority (MMDA) yesterday warned advertisers not to put up illegal posters and streamers along main thoroughfares, or risk being penalized.

MMDA Chair Bayani Fernando said in a press conference on Monday that they would immediately tear down signages without proper permits from the agency and local government units.

He also said the MMDA would not hesitate to remove legal posters which pose danger to motorists.

"For reason of safety, we will remove anything on the road, even those with permits," Fernando stressed.

Fernando said they were also considering shooting illegally put up posters, banners and billboards with water-based paintballs.

"This would send a message to the public that the offenders lack civic consciousness," he said.

He said the paintball idea was as legal as the MMDA art, which covers up vandalism on Metro Manila's walls.

The MMDA chair stressed that putting up illegal posters was "as criminal as vandalizing a wall" and should be sanctioned accordingly.

He said offenders would be fined P100 per illegal poster.

Fernando declared war on illegal posters and billboards even as he disowned signages bearing his face and showcasing his projects and achievements as MMDA chair.

"I have ordered their immediate removal," he told reporters, adding, "I think overzealous supporters are behind this campaign."

The MMDA anti-poster campaign jumpstarts the drive of the Commission on Elections (Comelec) to remove posters, banners, streamers and similar materials from the streets and roads of Metro Manila.

Dubbed "Oplan Baklas," the drive would target signages of politicians greeting local folk on various occasions.

Jovencia Balanguit, Marikina Comelec officer, said they would not spare even the posters of President Macapagal-Arroyo, who is running for reelection.

The Comelec drive is aimed at preventing aspirants in the May polls from campaigning prematurely. But Manila Councilor Marlon Lacson said signs that do not say "Vote" should be spared. *With reports from Luige del Puerto, Tarra Quismundo and Joyce Abaño*

UMASA Tayo...
UMASA Tayo... sa BAYANG ASENSO!
—President GLORIA

A WORKER installs a banner of President Macapagal-Arroyo along the QC Circle as the MMDA and the Comelec kick off separate drives to remove political and illegal posters off the streets. JOAN BONDOC

DENR urges LGUs to use recycled water

By Volt Contreras

AS THE capital's water reserve continued to drop, the Environment department yesterday asked Metro Manila mayors to refrain from using potable water to water plants and other greenery in their localities.

Instead, they could draw recycled water from a treatment plant in Makati City for their clean and green maintenance needs, said Environment Secretary Elisea Gozun.

In a letter to Chairman Bayani Fernando of the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority, Gozun pointed the local governments to the Magallanes Water Treatment Plant for their gardening needs.

In operation since the '60s, the plant, which is now being run by the Manila Water Company (MWC), processes an average of 34 million liters of waste water every day. Treated water is disposed into the Bilain Creek in Makati City.

Gozun asked Fernando to coordinate with the MWC for a supply arrangement with the capital's 17 towns and cities.

She said water from the treatment plant was not drinkable but safe for tending gardens.

As of Monday, Gozun said, the level at the Angat Dam, which supplies 97 percent of the water of the metropolis, had gone down to 195.58 meters, almost 7 meters below the comfort level. The crisis level is at 180 meters.

Woman, girl killed in San Juan mishap

By Luige del Puerto

THE BODIES of a woman and a little girl, believed to be mother and child, have been unclaimed since dying in an accident in San Juan early Sunday morning, the police said yesterday.

The yet unidentified victims, and 20-year-old gasoline attendant Analyn Madrid died when a Pajero plowed into them along Ortigas Avenue at about 7 a.m.

Investigation showed that the Pajero (YBF 888) driven by a certain Abdullah Moxcir was speeding along Ortigas Avenue toward Edsa when it rammed a Mitsubishi L200 pick-up (TTR 888) that was crossing the avenue into Wilson Street.

Impact

The impact sent the Pajero swerving to the right, straight into the woman and the child, who were standing in front of the Caltex gas station at the corner of Ortigas Avenue and Wilson Street.

Hitting the street gutter, the Pajero flipped on its side, tumbled and crashed into Madrid, who was then sweeping the gas station's driveway.

According to Insp. Winifredo Rivero, San Juan traffic police director, the woman and the child were killed on the spot. Madrid, on the other hand, died at the Cardinal Santos Hospital.

At least six other persons in the Pajero, including two children, were hurt.

The police said Moxcir, the driver of the Pajero, was apparently trying to beat the red light and caused the accident.

Driver disappears

Moxcir was nowhere to be found after the incident. However, his lawyer later went to the police and surrendered his driver's license.

The driver of the other vehicle, Eduardo Sapata Jr. presented himself to the police.

The unidentified female fatality wore an apple green blouse and *maong* pants. She was about 30 to 35 years old and around 5'4" tall.

The girl, who was about two to three years old, wore a pink blouse and was carrying a backpack.

Their bodies have been waiting for relatives to claim them at the St. Peter's Funeral Homes on Quezon Avenue in Quezon City.

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METROBRIEFS

Officer has too many guns

IT STARTED out with the simple serving of an arrest warrant for Chief Insp. Ruperto Regis who is facing bigamy charges. Regis now finds himself deeper in trouble after his home in Pasig City yielded a cache of about 80 firearms, 20 of which were not licensed. It was claimed that the guns belonged to the Philippine National Bank Financial Center and the Tiger Investigation and Detective Security Agency. However, the Pasig City police found out that the agency owned by a Kahul T. Tiang had ceased to operate, making the guns illegally stored at the house of Regis. As a consequence, the police are looking for Regis to pin him down on illegal possession of firearms, the police said. *Luige del Puerto*

Third most wanted

THE NUMBER 3 most wanted person on the list of the Southern Police District was nabbed by authorities Monday at 4:30 p.m. in Barangay Niing, San Antonio, Quezon. Ex-PO3 Dominador Gonzales, formerly assigned to the Pasay City police station, was tagged as the leader of the robbery group known as the "Mariposa gang" that victimized tourists at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport in November 2001.He was wanted for two counts of murder and armed robbery and had standing warrants of arrest. *Joyce Abaño*

Valeroso promoted

A SENIOR police official linked to a previous destabilization plot against the Macapagal administration has been promoted to the rank of full colonel. President Macapagal-Arroyo has approved the promotion to Senior Superintendent of Supt. Diosdado Valeroso, a member of the Young Officers Union. Valeroso was held in government custody in 2001 for allegedly plotting against the then months-old administration. He has been cleared of the charges. *Christian Esguerra*

Ilagan; 80

ARTURO Ilagan peacefully joined his Creator on Jan. 31, 2004 at the age of 80.

He is survived by his wife Lydia, children, grandchildren and great grandchildren.

His remains lie in state at La Funeraria Paz, Araneta Ave., Quezon City. Interment will be announced later.

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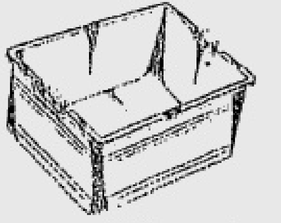
SUBJECT MATTERS: (1). -Registration / Patent No.3-2002-00749 Industrial Design-Crate 50L Round. (2). -Registration / Patent No.3-2002-00750 Industrial Design-Crate 60L Rectangular. (3).-Registration / Patent No. 3-2002-00751 Industrial Design-Crate 140L Rectangular.(4).-Registration / Patent No. 3-2002-00752 Industrial Design-Crate 70L Oval.(5).-Registration /Patent No.3-2002-000765 Industrial Design-Crate 50L Rectangular.(6).-Registration / Patent No. 3-2002-000773 Industrial Design-Excrete Container.(7).-Registration / Patent No. 3-2002-00748 Industrial Design-Drainage Canal.

The Registration / Patent / Industrial Designs are as follows:



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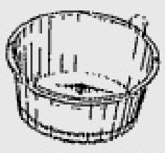

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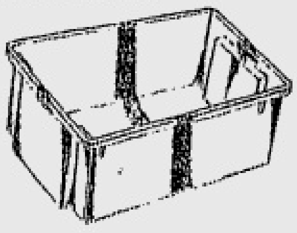

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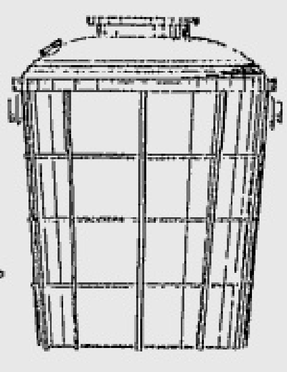
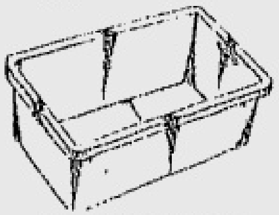


Excrete Container



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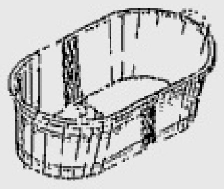

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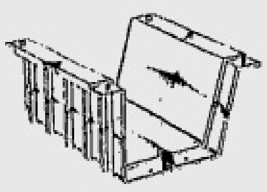

Drainage Canal

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SUERTRES
9 4 4
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6/42 Luzon
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Vis-Min
1 6 7 16 24 41

Pa dies saving child from attacker

Manila boardwalk incident raises security, safety concerns

By Leila Salaverria

WHEN Roel Mendoza on Monday took his family for a stroll at the touted boardwalk on Manila Bay to mark his wife's birthday, he did not realize that they would be walking straight into harm's way.

Mendoza, his wife Cecille, their daughter, 5, and a son, 4, were taking a leisurely walk on the bayside promenade behind the Quirino Grandstand in Manila when a woman approached the family and tried to engage them in small talk at 11:45 p.m., SPO2 Edgardo Ko said. When the family ignored her, the woman, Jennifer Tuzon, walked away.

Minutes later, Tuzon, 23, again approached the family, grabbed the girl, threw her into the water and jumped in after her, the investigator said.

Witnesses told SPO2 Ko that Tuzon was trying to keep the girl's head under water. Mendoza, 40, then jumped into the water to save his daughter, but Tuzon fought him off. Lifeguard Protacio Dapiton then jumped in to save the girl. He kicked Tuzon and managed to pull the girl to safety. Tuzon was later hauled to shore and placed under arrest, Ko said.

The authorities then went looking for Mendoza, but there was no sign of him.

Two hours later, members of the Philippine Coast Guard found Mendoza under the concrete posts supporting the boardwalk. Mendoza had drowned.

The girl has been taken to the Manila Doctor's Hospital, where she is now under observation. The suspect, said to be mentally deranged, is now behind bars.

The incident highlighted security concerns at the site—famed for its view of Manila Bay.

But Supt. Elmer Jamias of the Western Police District said that the attack on the family is an isolated incident. He pointed out that nothing like it had taken place on the boardwalk in the last few years.

Jamias also said that guards of the National Parks Development Committee are the ones charged with securing the boardwalk. He added that there is also a precinct located near the boardwalk.

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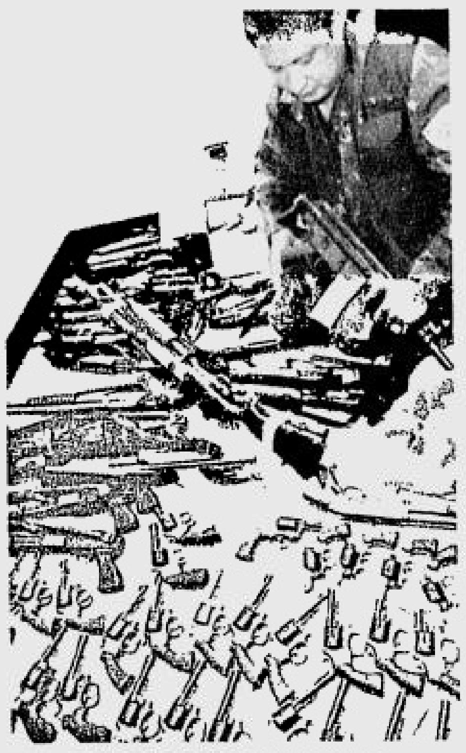

HIS OWN PRIVATE ARSENAL
A police officer sorts out some of the 83 weapons seized in the Pasig City residence of Chief Insp. Ruberto Regis Jr. Police officials are wondering what Regis, now at large, is up to (see story on page A23). EDWIN BACASMAS

Manila a hot spot? Better believe it, says Atienza

By Tarra Quismundo and Leila Salaverria

Yes, Manila is a hot spot. But that's because a lot of things—particularly the food—simply sizzles in the capital.

"If Manila could be called a hot spot, it's because of Roxas Boulevard or Avenida Rizal (pedestrianized Rizal Avenue) ... there are many barbecue grills there," said Manila Mayor Joselito Atienza Jr. in jest.

The national police on Monday tagged the city as among the 12 election hotspots in Metro Manila.

The other identified hotspots in the metropolis are Caloocan, Makati, Quezon City, Parañaque, Las Piñas, Pasig, Marikina and the municipalities of Taguig, Pateros, Navotas and San Juan, according to a Philippine National Police report.

Atienza yesterday went on to dismiss the report, saying that none of the past elections in the city were marred by violence.

"I don't agree," Atienza said during an interview. "We've never been identified (as an election hot spot before), and we've always had orderly and peaceful elections."

The mayor also vowed that this election period—from campaigning to election day—would be peaceful and orderly.

Western Police District director Chief Supt. Pedro Bulaong also denied that poll-related violence could break out in Manila.

Bulaong explained that what the city has are "areas of concern," where massive vote-buying and partisanship are likely to take place.

Earlier, the WPD chief had tagged the areas as the Baseco and Parola compounds, and the Smokey Mountain area, which are all depressed communities in Manila.

Police round up 24 gun ban violators

METRO Manila police officers have rounded up at least 24 people for violating the Commission on Elections ban on deadly weapons.

According to the Northern Police District, 14 people were arrested in Caloocan City, four in Malabon City, two in Valenzuela City and one in Navotas between Dec. 15 and Jan. 20.

On Monday, three men were caught in Parañaque City.

All of the arrested suspects were found carrying guns. Nobody has been arrested for carrying knives or ice-picks, although the ban also covers these deadly weapons.

The weapons ban took effect 147 days before the elections and will stay until June 9.

On Monday night, police manning a choke point on Aguinaldo Ave. in San Dionisio, Parañaque flagged down a heavily tinted car and arrested the three men on board who were each armed with a .45-caliber pistol.

Jessie Negro, Octavio Derain and Mariano de Leon Jr. did not even have with them the licenses of their firearms, police said.

NPD Director Marcelino Franco told the INQUIRER yesterday that the Comelec ban had been integrated with the existing chokepoints and checkpoints in the Camanava area.

Two of the 12 areas which the the national police tagged as election hot spots—Caloocan City and Navotas—are under the NPD. Franco said the announcement surprised him.

Franco said that at the moment, there is no need to step up security measures in Caloocan and Navotas.

The district director said that the peace and order situation in the district is "normal."

Edson Tandoc Jr., Joyce Abaño

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BASKETBALL: NBA-Cavs vs Pistons; 8:30 a.m. (r-8 p.m.); Solar Sports—Cleveland takes on division rival Detroit.
Hardwood Classics-Bulls vs Celtics, Game 2, 1986 Eastern First Round; 12 noon; Solar Sports—Michael Jordan sets the NBA Playoff Record in this game, scoring 63 points against Larry Bird and Boston. Though Chicago loses this game and the series, Michael Jordan still sets the tone for how he would perform in Playoff Series to come!

Schedules subject to change without prior notice.

Trinidad quits; Welcoat wins

PBL commissioner frustrated, displeased over recent turn of events

GAME TOMORROW (*Pasig Sports Center*)
3:30 p.m.—Fash vs Welcoat (Game 4)

By Marc Anthony Reyes

CHINO Trinidad resigned unexpectedly yesterday as PBL commissioner at halftime of the third game of the Platinum Cup championship series later won by Welcoat Paints with a 60-53 decision over Fash Liquid Detergent at the Pasig Sports Center.

Trinidad, who assumed his post in 2000, said he won't even bother to finish the best-of-five title series which the Paint Masters now led, 2-1.

"I have exceeded the three years I set myself for this position," said Trinidad, who admitted his frustration and displeasure over recent turn of events, including a display of defiance in Game 3 by Welcoat players following the choice of Fash's Peter June Simon as Most Valuable Player over Paint Master Jercules Tangkay.

TRINIDAD

As if to mock the selection of Simon, Welcoat players wore stickers that read "MVP Tangkay," during the game although team owner Raymond Yu later said the action had no blessing from management.

"If that is not a show of utter disrespect, then I don't know what is," said Trinidad.

Tangkay was ahead in the statistical race but lost to Simon, who gained more votes from the players and the media despite ranking fifth in the statistics. *(See related story on page A26).*

Yu later said his players only showed their support for Tangkay in the case of the sticker issue, adding he had no way of knowing about it because the stickers were hidden by their warmup suits.

"Still I reaffirm Welcoat's support for Chino as a commissioner. *Wala naman kaming away* (We have no differences)," Yu said.

Trinidad also described as an "insult to the league" a key player in the title series, "who doesn't want to play despite his credentials."

Insiders said the player is Welcoat's James Yap, who played below par in the first two games of the playoffs. Yap recently signed an P11 million, three-and-a-half-year contract with Purefoods in the PBA.

The commissioner also said the transfer of JR Reyes of University of the Philippines to Welcoat instead of Blu Star in this conference was tantamount to breaking the "gentlemen's agreement" agreed upon by the team owners.

He said his departure won't affect the title series. "The remaining part of the series is just an icing in the cake. We have done the hardest part in the eliminations and the semifinals," he added.

Ironically, Tangkay came up with an MVP-like performance with 24 points and Yap asserted himself with 17 in Game 3. In contrast, Simon, bothered by an injury, was scoreless for the first time in the league in 34 minutes of action.

Trinidad, the youngest to be named PBL commissioner, was responsible for restoring the popularity of the league, known for providing the PBA with fresh, premier talents.

Deputy commissioner Tommy Ong was named interim chief of the league.

Scores

WELCOAT 60—Tangkay 24, Yap 17, Omolon 7, Wilson 5, Pingris 3, Cuan 2, Sotto 1, Artadi 1, Reyes 0.

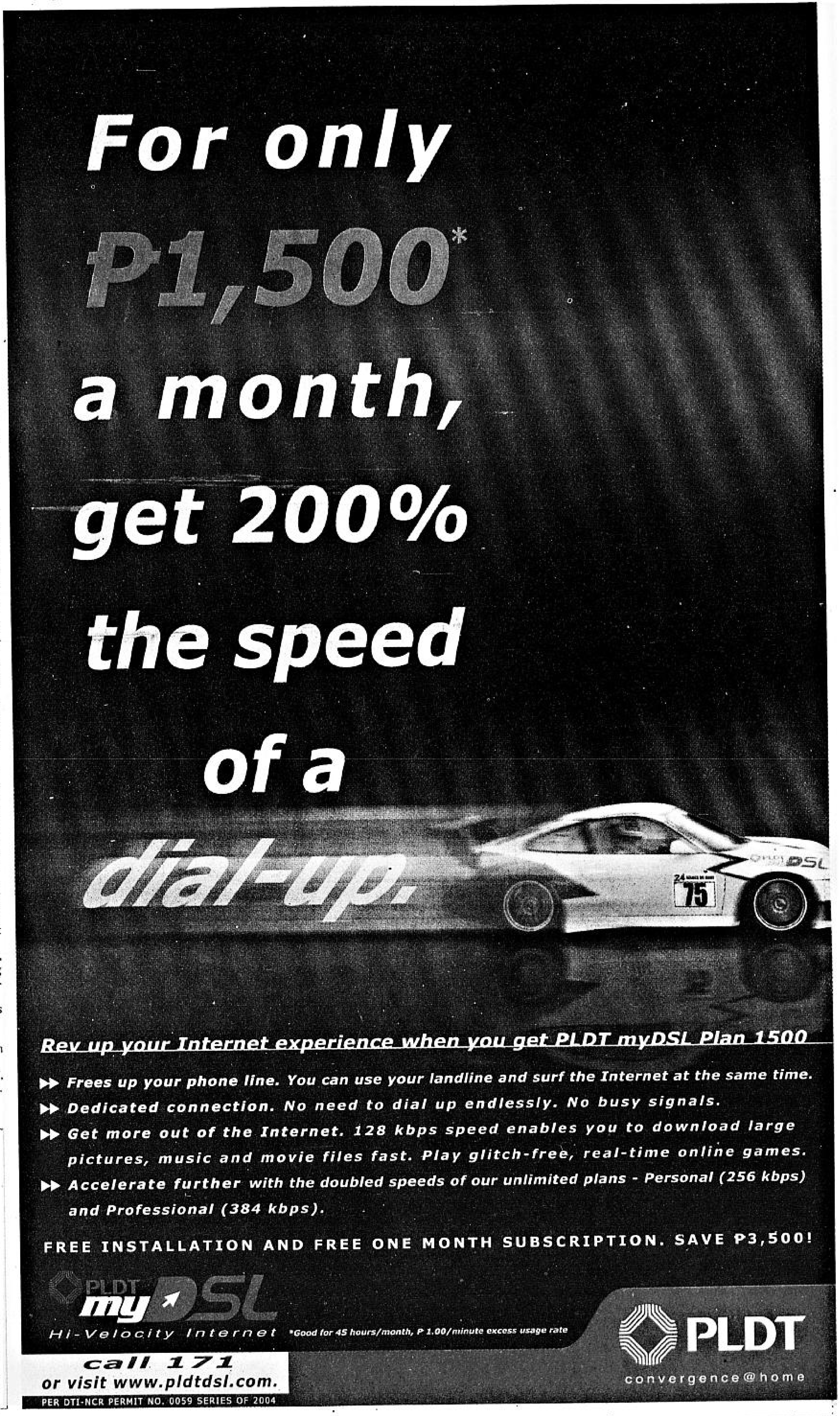
FASH 53—Mercado 14, Dy 9, Salangsang 9, Alvarez 7, Tan 5, Gelig 4, Fonacier 3, Gonzalez 2, Simon 0, Tenorio 0.

Quarters: 13-20, 33-29, 48-41, 60-53

Sambajon grabs Swanson crown

SANTOS Sambajon of Quezon province defeated Ian Costello, 13-5, in the finals to receive the top purse of $3,000 (P168,000) in the recent Jay Swanson Memorial Tournament held at Gaslamp Billiard Palace and College Billiards in San Diego, California.

Beaten by Jerry "Baby Huey" Matchin 9-6, the 43-year-old California-based Sambajon came back by whipping Aaron Aragon, 7-2, and Marshall Jung, 7-5, respectively, in the loser's bracket to arrange the race-to-13 championship showdown with Costello. *Marlon Bernardino, Contributor*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Guiao wants Clark as new sports mecca

NOT even the failed bid to bring the 23rd Southeast Asian Games to the heart of Pampanga has dampened coach Yeng Guiao's vision to turn the province into the country's next sports mecca.

The Red Bull mentor yesterday reiterated a much-ignored but highly appropriate call for the construction of a modern sports facility inside the vast Clark Field in Angeles City.

It may be a daunting task, especially on the financial side, but it can be done, according to Guiao, a Pampanga board member.

"You should have vision and determination to put it to reality," said Guiao in yesterday's PSA Forum at the Manila Pavilion.

GUIAO

Lack of time and resources to build a sports complex in the former US air force base doomed Pampanga's bid to become the main hub of next year's edition of the SEA Games to be held in the country for the third time.

Instead, Manila will again be the site of most of the action, with satellite venues in nearby areas, including Pampanga, hosting some events.

But Guiao is looking beyond the SEAG.

"The construction is not only meant for the SEA Games, but for the country to really have a modern sports facility. Are we going to always rely on the old Rizal Memorial?

With a modern facility, we can afford to host other sports events. We can even host the Asian Games, why not? That's why I think this is the right time to seriously consider the idea," added the son of the late Pampanga Gov. Bren Guiao in the forum sponsored by Agfa Colors and Red Bull.

Guiao bared that Manny Angeles, Clark Development Corp. president, has already offered about 100 hectares inside Clark as possible site for the sports complex.

Funding is the only major concern said Guiao, adding some P3 billion may be needed. "In this aspect, you just have to be more creative. You have to convince investors and the government itself. It all depends on the arrangement, how much one party will have to spend, how much one gets, among others," said the former Philippine Basketball League commissioner.

For next year's SEA Games, Guiao said Clark and Subic are ideal sites for events like archery, cycling, billiards, table tennis, boxing and marathon.

SURPRISE CHOICE

Simon MVP, courtesy of players, media

By Marc Anthony Reyes

PETER June Simon, Fash Liquid Detergent's low-key sentinel, yesterday captured the PBL Platinum Cup Most Valuable Player award over the league's top pro draftees this year.

SIMON: Low-key

The 23-year-old Simon, who played for the Davao Eagles in the MBA before moving to the PBL, topped the voting from his fellow players and mediamen to clinch the league's most coveted award despite ranking only fifth in the statistical race.

"I really did not expect to win this MVP trophy because there are a lot of other players who deserve to win," said Simon, who also snagged a two-year contract with Purefoods this season.

The native of Makilala, North Cotabato, tallied 750.27 points overall in beating the popular Welcoat backcourt tandem of James Yap and Jercules Tangkay and Fash teammate Rich Alvarez.

Alvarez and Yap were picked No. 1 and No. 2 in the PBA draft by Shell and Purefoods, respectively.

Simon, who has a management degree from the University of Mindanao in Davao, got 362.34 from the balloting, while earning 387.93 in the statistical points which involved his scores, rebounds, assists and blocks.

Tangkay, who played for two teams in the PBA before winding up with Welcoat, led the statistical race with 447.46 points.

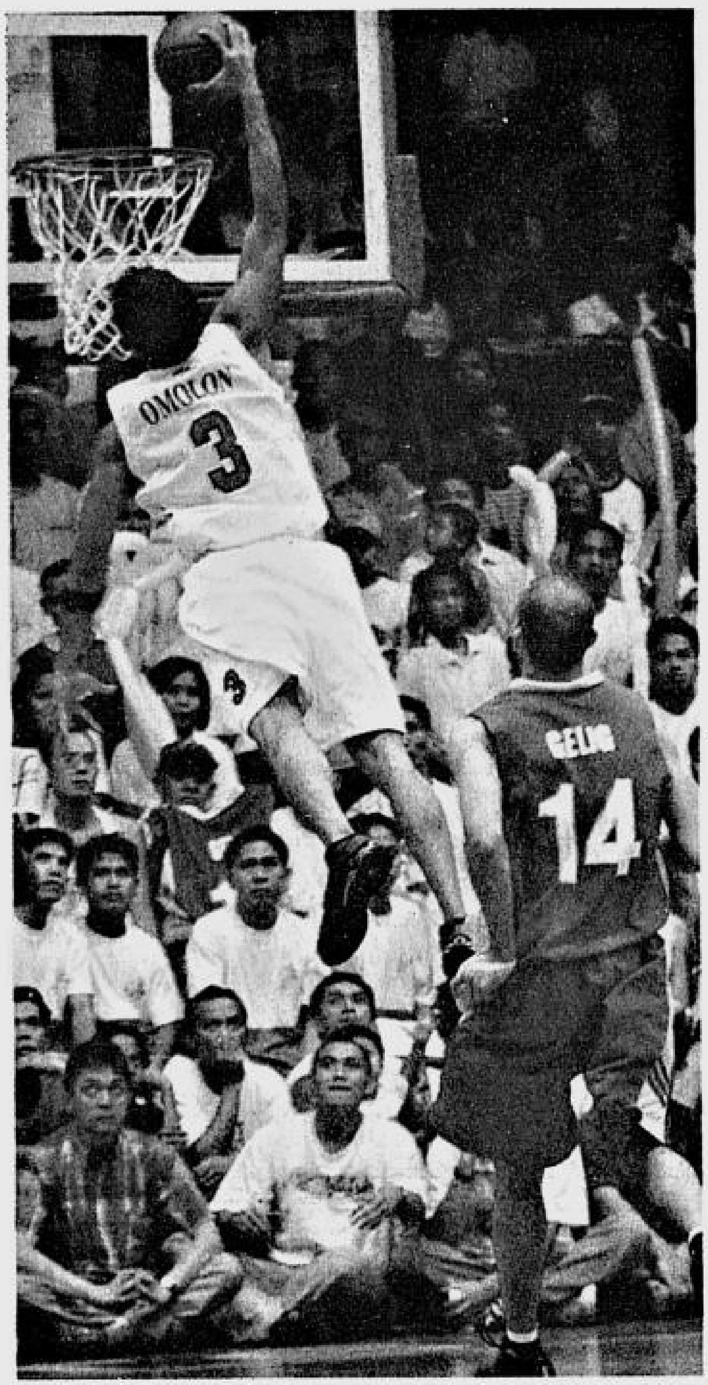
"I was just trying to help the team to the best of my capacity," said Simon, who inked a one-year-and-nine-month contract with the Hotdogs. He will earn P80,000 a month in the first year and P120,000 in the second.

Sunkist's Jemal Vizcarra ran away with the Newcomer Award, beating JR Reyes of Welcoat and Montaña's Ronjay Enrile.

Joining Simon in the Mythical First Team are Alvarez, Yap, Tangkay and Ervin Sotto. Sunkist's Alex Compton, Fash's Allan Salangsang, Welcoat's Marc Pingris, Paul Artadi and Willie Wilson were named to the Second Team.

Niño Gelig of Fash bagged the Most Improved Award, while Sunkist's Dondon Villamin went home with the Sudden Impact Award, which is given to the player with crowd-drawing power.

Simon led all scorers after the semis with 280 points, or an average of 16.47 points per game. He also shared the Commissioner's Choice Award, given to a player who contributed a lot in boosting the league image, with Compton and Alvarez.



WELCOAT'S Nelbert Omolon executes a slam in Game 3 of the PBL Samsung Cup finals.

ERNIE U. SARMIENTO

No Skins, but more money for local pros

By Jong Arcano

THE IMMINENT cancelation of a lavish Skins Game—a planned side-event of this month's DHL-Philippine Open at Mimosa that was designed to be just a party for four—is bound to benefit the majority of local professionals hungry for tournaments.

With Frankie Miñoza and Jenny Rosales already declining their invitations to play in the Open appetizer, organizers are seriously contemplating on scrapping the Skins Game altogether and instead diverting the P1-million prize to a couple of events for the homegrown pros.

"We are considering that (cancelation) and we will announce our decision soon," said Benny Gopez, secretary-general of the organizing National Golf Association of the Philippines.

With no tournament lined up for the locals after the Open, Gopez said the funds saved may be staked for some events during the summer that can hopefully help revive the pro tour.

The NGAP failed to strike a deal with Rosales, who had expressed her intention to play in a couple of tune-up events in New Zealand and Australia late this month before resuming her campaign in the 2004 season of the LPGA Tour.

The names of Ria Quiazon, Heidi Chua, Angelo Que and Jerome Delariarte have cropped up as possible replacements, but with the Open less than three weeks away, the holding of the high-budgeted Skins Game is deemed unfeasible.

As this developed, the NGAP announced yesterday that San Miguel Corp. has agreed to serve as a co-presenter of the 88th staging of the Open to the tune of P3 million.

The big sum from San Miguel adds to the $150,000 (about P8.4 million) DHL is infusing as the title sponsor of the event slated Feb. 26-29 at the Acacia View and Lake View courses of Mimosa inside Clark Field in Angeles City.

Elorde 'Banquet of Champions' fetes Pacquiao

MANNY Pacquiao, currently the world's finest featherweight, and other Filipino international boxing champions last year will be honored during the Gabriel "Flash" Elorde Awards set March 25 at the Dusit Hotel in Makati.

PACQUIAO

Dubbed the Flash Elorde "Banquet of Champions," the affair will be staged during the 69th birth anniversary of Da Flash, the first Filipino to be inducted into the International Boxing Hall of Fame.

"Of all sports, boxing created the biggest stir in 2003, and the victory of Manny Pacquiao was the biggest sports story of the year," said promoter Johnny Elorde, son of the legendary boxer, who is overseeing preparations for the event.

The Awards Night is being held for the fourth straight year by the Elorde family in memory of the late "Flash," the world's greatest in the junior lightweight division, which he ruled for seven years from 1960 to 1967.

In 1993, Elorde was among the first batch of honorees inducted into the International Hall of Fame. In the same group were Marvelous Marvin Hagler, Joey Giardello, Harold Johanson and Fritzie Zivic and old timers Maxie Rosenbloom, Tommy Gibbons, Tiger Flowers and Les Darcy.

Ateneo golfers pace Archers by 4 strokes

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FORMER President Ramos hits the ceremonial drive.

LA Salle dominated the high school play but Ateneo set the pace in college action in yesterday's opening round of the Samsung Interscholastics golf championships at the Legends course of Manila Southwoods in Carmona, Cavite.

Vendrick Tan amassed 33 points from a 3-over-par 75 in medal play while John Gobing, the club champion of Wack Wack, contributed 30 as the Ateneans posted 86 points. La Salle, drawing 30 points from Oliver Gan, was at 82.

Unheralded Brixton Aw of College of St. Benilde surprised the big guns by taking the lead in the individual derby, firing a 2-under-par 70 for 38 points in the 54-hole tourney sponsored by Samsung.

The tourney has drawn the major support of Manila Southwoods, with co-sponsors Tokyo Tokyo, Gatorade, Rogin-E, Dunlop Golf, Rudy Project, Custom Clubmakers and Wilson. Radio stations Killer-Bee, Jam 88.3, Wave 89.1, Magic 89.9, 99.5 RT and 103.5 K-Lite are media partners.

Getting 36 points from Miko Alejandro, La Salle-Zobel aggregated 92 to move up by three points over La Salle-Greenhills. La Salle-Lipa was 11 points behind at 81.

But Alejandro's big start at his home course only gave him a one-point lead in the individual category as Miko Yee played steady with a 35. Justin Tambunting, also of La Salle-Zobel, scored 34 for third place.

St. Benedict College surged ahead by five over Ateneo I in boys elementary with 65 points.

The combined high school-college division for girls saw newcomer Miriam College streaking to a 13-point advantage. La Salle was second at 32 and Ateneo a point behind at 31.

AR Ramos of LSGH came through with 38 points to emerge as the frontrunner in the special boys' 10-under division. Elizabeth Seton's James Ricohermoso and Ateneo's Bino dela Paz took the next two spots. *Jong Arcano*

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BARE EYE

Recab Trinidad

(LOVE CALL: "Checkmate: The Cesar Ruiz Aquino Reader," published by Midtown Publishing, celebrates a triple launch on Feb. 6, 1st Friday of this love month: 10:30 a.m. at the Bienvenido N. Santos Creative Writing Center at De La Salle University; 3:30 p.m. at the College of Arts and Letters audio-visual room UP Faculty Center; 6:30 in the evening at the Mag:net Gallery and Bookstore at the Loop, ELJ Tower, inside the ABS-CBN Complex. Aquino, 2004-2005 National Fellow for Poetry of the UP Institute of Creative Writing, will autograph copies, if he survives tonight's boozing at the Castillo Villa in Alabang.)

***

THE FIRST question he had to answer was: Why?

Why, in the first place, did he organize a most unlikely league, the Marikina inter-barangay youth baseball tournament that opened at the Marikina Sports Center last Sunday?

Because it had to be done, replied Ricky Florencio, a hunched, unassuming engineer with the frail build of a light flyweight boxer.

Actually, Florencio, cousin of basketball great Danny Florencio, did not have to be questioned on his heartwarming role.

It should be the government and any of its agencies tasked to look after youth welfare that should be put in a spot.

Anyway, Florencio explained that he organized the tournament for small boys because it had to be done. And nobody else seemed ready and willing to make the sacrifice.

Just like that. Because something had to be done. Period.

***

Well, it was not as plain as saying you climb the mighty mountain because it is there.

Some ten ball clubs competing in the bronco division (ages 11-13), plus guest teams from various institutions, are seeing action in the tournament, announced a publication rushed overnight by comebacking poet Onofre Valdenor.

The vast, grassy field of the complex built by the great Gov. Isidro Rodriguez of Rizal in 1968 was a poet's delight, a happy monument to eager innocence.

Small boys in multicolored uniforms, who may not have known what the game was all about, giving it a try, uneasy with the heavy bat, awkward with the big, unwieldy field leather gloves.

It was indeed a Sunday of discovery, not only for the many children out there but for other guests, like this reporter, who strayed into the affair to witness something unusual.

It was quite heartwarming to see how an obscure, selfless man had given his time and effort for countless young souls who had to be imparted with proper training and direction early in life.

***

Marikina Mayor Marides Fernando came, so did Marikina Rep. Del de Guzman.

Long after the opening games were through, close to lunchtime, Philippine Amateur Baseball president Hector Navasero, sweaty in his signature yellow bush jacket, remained at the sidelines visibly amazed, still admiring the minor miracle realized before him.

The league was a sports developer's dream.

And the next question Engineer Florencio had to answer was: How?

How and where did he get the money, equipment, manpower and all other necessities for the staging of the tournament for kids?

The reply was plain and frank. He begged around.

The Philippine Sports Commission, now that it could not even pay the electric bills of some national sports associations housed at the Rizal Memorial Complex in Manila, could not be expected to show interest.

But the Tingzons of Laguna, the father-and-son baseball-loving tandem of Totoy and Boy Tingzon, readily offered support. (They happened to be friends with Florencio.) So did Mr. Navasero.

There was this special mention of David Lung of the Sakurai Co. for the 16 baseball gloves it donated through Richard Tiu, president of the Marikina Chapter of the Filipino Chinese Chamber of Commerce.

***

Of course, Florencio first had to organize the Marikina Youth Baseball/Softball Foundation Inc. with the support of local government officials led by Representative De Guzman, Mayor Fernando and Vice Mayor Marion Andres.

Seeing action in the games are the Barangka Cardinals, De la Peña Seals, Malanday Mantas, Nangka Stings, San Roque Puppies, Sto. Niño Youth Puppies and Sto. Niño Angels, plus guest teams from St. Marcellin Baseball Club, Manila Boys Town and Barangay Balinte from Cainta.

The tournament plays seven games every Saturday and Sunday for the whole of February for a total of 49 matches.

Several players could be picked from the tournament for the national team that will see action in regional and international competitions.

***

But listen. If it were a basketball tournament Engineer Florencio had dared organize for small boys, he would have had no problem with recruitment, uniforms, equipment, organization, etc.

Practically everybody around knows how basketball is played and scored.

But not baseball, where you need various requirements, a wide field, a riot of equipment like masks, gloves, bats, not to mention the umpires and other strange accoutrements.

Football would have also been a lot easier to do.

Now, you need not wonder why this peppery light flyweight by the name of Ricky Florencio is getting special mention here.

The fellow is a rarity. He might have been a freak, the only baseball lover with such a big, immeasurable, unyielding heart and dedication out there in Marikina.

If you find someone else of his kind, please don't hesitate to call.

SPORTSWATCH

Chua rules exec chess

CHEMIST and businessman Emil Chua scored five straight wins then drew with Orlando Pascual of STI in the last round to top the Active Chess Center of Asia (Acca) Invitational executive tournament recently at the Land Bank Plaza in Manila. Lawyer Clibum Anthony Orbe was runner-up with 5 points. Tied for third and fourth places were Abdel Hassan and Orlando Pascual with 4.5 each, half a point in front of Roberto Racasa and engineer Jose Madriaga. Rounding out the top 10 with 3.5 points each are engineer Gunnar Abelido, Samir Samuel Leusen, Erven Perlas, Cecil Padua and engineer Vivencio Nachor Jr. The one-day, six-round Swiss system event coincided with the 2003 Philippine Executive Active Chess Express (Peace) grand finals where engineer Ravel Canlas won the title in the Elite section, and musician Christopher Castellano captured the Classic section championship.

Unrated rapid chess tilt up

THE FEBRUARY edition of MCC Unrated Rapid chess gets underway at 9 a.m. on Sunday at the J&F Divino Bldg. on 967 Aurora Blvd. (near LRT 2 Anonas Station), Quezon City. Open to all beginners as well as to players with ratings not over 1800, the one-day event will use the seven-round Swiss system and time control of 30 minutes per player. Up for grabs is a total pot of P10,000 with the champion pocketing the top purse of P3,000. For inquiries, call MCC at 826-8560 or 0916-8521069.

Benilde beats Mapua, 2-0

COLLEGE of Saint Benilde's hopes for a finals slot in the NCAA football tournament got a boost recently as the Blazers defeated Mapua Cardinals, 2-0, at the start of second-round hostilities at the Rizal Memorial football pitch. CSB scored its first goal in the 24th minute when striker Nino Zayco converted a defender's errant pass. Mapua broke down a second time in the 61st minute when its usually reliable goalkeeper Adonis Tan failed to control a strike by Blazers captain PJ Arenal. In the junior division, unbeaten CSB-La Salle Greenhills took the first-round pennant.

Inner Wheel tourneys set

TOURNAMENTS in golf and bowling will precede the 38th national conference of the Inner Wheel Clubs of the Philippines Inc. set Feb. 15-16 at the Manila Hotel. A bowling competition will be held at Power Bowl at the Rockwell Power Plant in Makati City on Feb. 6, with the golf tourney teeing off on Feb. 13 at the Ayala Golf and Country Club, said overall national chair Gloria "Baby" Golez. The tournaments are expected to attract a big number of Inner Wheel members, according to bowling and golf committee chairs Sol Vasquez and Nanette Qua and sports committee head Baby Santos.

Cockers showdown

LAS Piñas and Elorde cockers collide starting at 7 p.m. today in a special 3-cock derby at the air-conditioned Las Piñas Cockpit. The 50-fight program, sponsored by Sagupaan Complexor 3000 and hosted by Vetsin/Albert, stakes a total cash prize of P300,000 with an entry fee of P6,600. For details, call 873-1040. Meanwhile, a galore of special prizes and giveaways awaits participants in the upcoming "Handlers Cup 3-Cock Derby" set Feb. 11 at the cockpit. Cash prize at stake is P300,000 and the entry fee is P6,600. Each participant will get P2,000 worth of casino chips from C F-Parañaque, five T-shirts, product samples of Sagupaan Superfeeds and one case of San Miguel Beer. The fastest kill winner will get P10,000 and trophy from *sabong* idol Patrick Antonio. Derby champions will receive two refrigerators from LPC management.

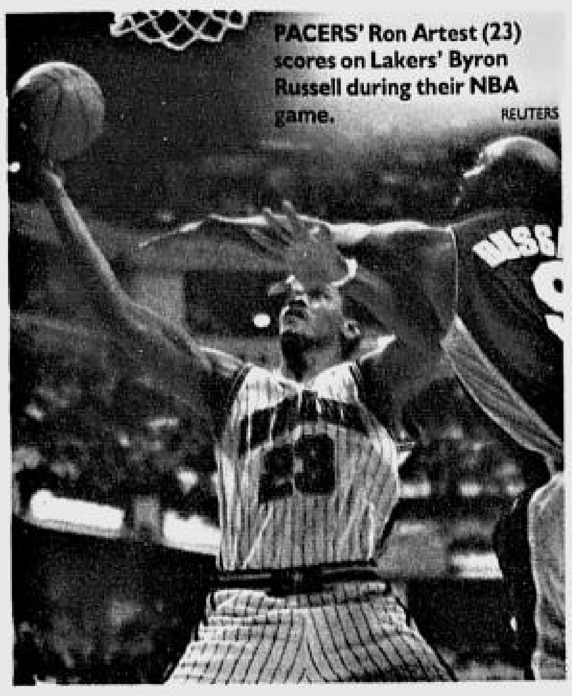
Salud, Orillaza head field

THE MUCH-AWAITED "Big Fight Sa Pasay 5-Cock Dery" gets under way this Friday at the Pasay City Cockpit with more than 70 fights on tap. Former PBA commissioner Rudy Salud and Lito Orillaza, fresh off their victory in the World Slashers Cup, will banner a tough cast of participants that include Gov. Ito Yñares, Ramon Mancenares, Mayor Nene Aguilar, Gerry Ramos, Mayor Jessie Viceo, Patrick Antonio, Blandy Tolentino, William Go, Boy Royo, Pol Estrellado and Benjie Lim. Sponsored by Sagupaan Hammer, Sagupaan Mite Free, Sagupaan Ba-50 Forten and Complexor 3000, the cockfest is hosted by PCC manager Eric de la Rosa and the LCC Leonard Group. Entry fee is P55,000 in the derby which starts at 5 p.m. Participants must submit entries tomorrow from 2 p.m. to 9 p.m. For inquiries, call 816-6750, 843-1890 and 843-1746.

REBONG (second from left) and Diaz flanked by Andam (left) and Ceballos.

UE bet tops billiards tilt

JOHN Limuel Rebong of the University of the East beat Ricardo Diaz Jr. of Technological University of the Philippines, 7-4, last Saturday to rule the 1st GSM Blue University Open 9-Ball Billiards Challenge at Marvin's Billiards at SM Manila. Nearly 1,000 students from 20 universities competed for major titles in the tournament also supported by Ad Staunch Communication Network, Compass Internet and the Philippine Daily Inquirer. Along with the champion's trophy, Rebong bagged a gold medal, P20,000 cash prize and a gift pack from GSM Blue. Diaz settled for the runner-up purse of P15,000 and the silver medal. Veteran internationalist Leonardo Andam and honoree Florendo Ceballos of GSM Blue Brand Management Team awarded the prizes.



PACERS' Ron Artest (23) scores on Lakers' Byron Russell during their NBA game. REUTERS

Pacers rout Lakers

TORONTO—With both teams missing their big men, the Indiana Pacers proved too strong for the visiting Los Angeles Lakers in a comfortable 85-72 victory on Monday.

The Lakers' Shaquille O'Neal was sitting out a one-game suspension for comments made to the media in Toronto on Sunday, disappointing the sellout crowd, who came hoping to catch a glimpse of the 7ft-1in center.

Jermaine O'Neal, the Pacers' leading scorer, was also sidelined, nursing a strained neck suffered against the Boston Celtics on Saturday.

Ron Artest took on the mantle of leader for the Pacers, notching 24 points despite shooting just 9-of-27 while grabbing seven rebounds.

Al Harrington added 16 points and pulled down seven boards.

Veteran Reggie Miller added another seven points to go past the 24,000-mark for his career.

The game was half over before the Lakers found their scoring touch, as they notched a mere 26 first-half points, one more than a franchise low.

They shot 8-of-38 for the half, a mere 21 percent, with nine-time All-Star Gary Payton making only one of his eight attempts to bring down the average.

Payton wound up with 10 points, next best to Ukranian-born Stanislav Medvedenko, who finished with 14.

Already depleted by injury, the Lakers went much of the game without guard Kareem Rush, who limped off the court with a right ankle sprain.

The defeat came in the second of a seven-game road trip for the Lakers, who have a disappointing 10-14 record after starting the season 18-3.

Complete results: Indiana 85, LA Lakers 72; Detroit 102, Miami 100 (OT); LA Clippers 101, Atlanta 95; New Jersey 91, New Orleans 70; Memphis 106, Golden State 101; Denver 116, Portland 97; San Antonio 83, Utah 65; Phoenix 99, Houston 79; Seattle 109, Chicago 97.

AP

Bird flu: How safe are our fighting cocks?

CLEAN LIVING

Manolo R. Iñigo

WE are lucky the bird flu outbreak has not reached our country. Still, many are urging local authorities not to be too complacent in their campaign to prevent the deadly virus from reaching our shores. Local officials, they said, should adopt strict and tight quarantine regulations, including imposing a total ban on the importation and smuggling of chickens from affected nations.

Recently, the Luzon Game Cock Breeders Association, composed of many big-time cocker-breeders, some of whom are my friends, asked veterinary officers to implement the ban to protect the cockfighting and breeding industry. This is, without question, a step in the right direction.

There are thousands, perhaps millions of gamecocks, in the Philippines where cockfighting is the most popular pastime. Next to basketball, cockfighting is the biggest spectator sport among Filipinos. The record will show that there are now close to 2,000 registered cockpits in the country, especially in the rural areas.

The deadly bird flu has raced through 10 Asian countries and killed at least 12 people as of yesterday. On Monday, a teenage boy in Vietnam died, while a 58-year-old woman in Thailand succumbed to the disease.

"Bird flu remains a serious public health and animal threat, particularly in China, Thailand and Vietnam," said He Changchui of the UN Food and Agriculture Organization. "So far, more than 45 million chickens have been culled to contain it."

During an emergency bird flu meeting of Asian ministers and international health experts in Thailand late last month, Bangkok officials said the virus was detected in a fighting cock and other fowl around the sprawling metropolis. According to these same officials, the dreaded disease had now been detected in about one-third of Thailand's provinces.

"There's always a potential threat for this kind of outbreak to result in serious global pandemic," warned Shigeru Omi, regional director of the World Health Organization.

But Filipino cocker-breeders are not worried.

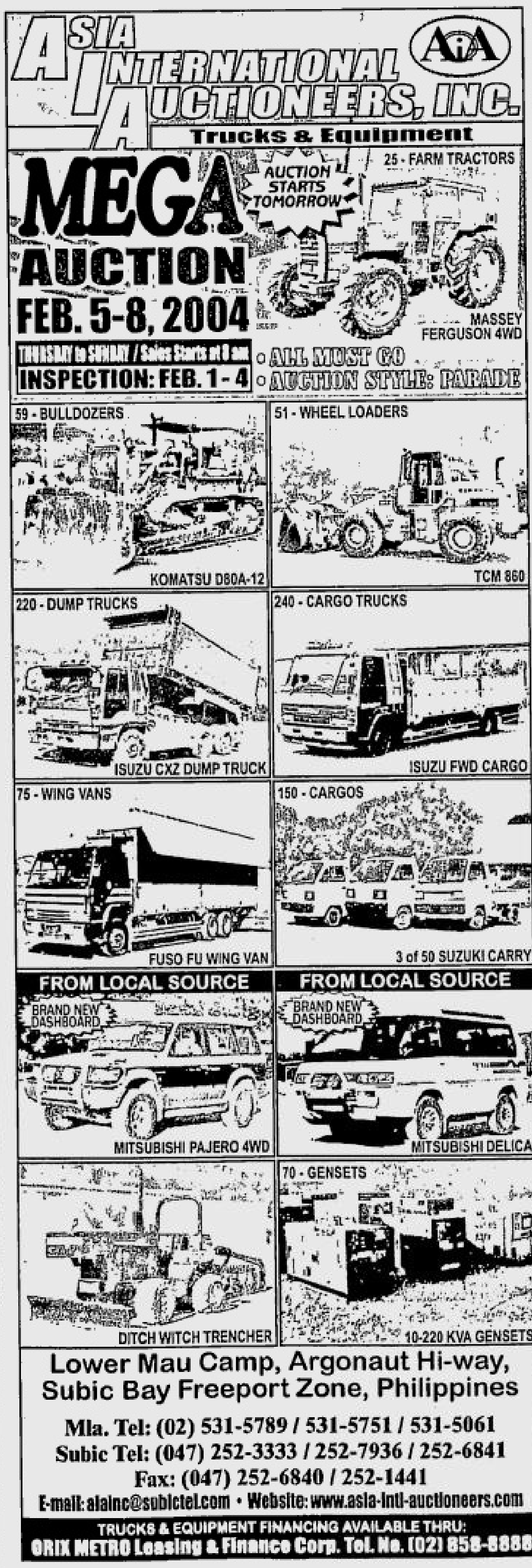
"There is nothing to worry about," said upcoming cocker-breeder Rey Briones, a newspaper executive and World Slasher champion. "All our fighting cocks are well-taken care of. We have taken preventive measures by giving our chickens regular dosages of antibiotics and multivitamins. And our farms are clean and well-manicured as well."

Another cocker-breeder and World Slasher winner, Dicky Lim, agreed. In a phone interview from Iloilo on Monday, Lim said there's no need to panic. "Everything is under control."

Since the bird flu outbreak in Asia, millions of birds have been killed to contain it. The disease is considered by medical experts as comparable, although not deadlier, with last year's global outbreak of SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome). So far, 10 governments have reported some strain of bird flu—Thailand, China, Vietnam, South Korea, Cambodia, Japan, Laos, Pakistan, Taiwan and Indonesia, which has resisted the clamor to kill chickens and ducks beyond the infected birds. Indonesia on Sunday set aside $5.92 million to pay back poultry raisers who had been ordered to cull sick poultry.

Asia is a main source of chickens and ducks, supplying 27 percent of the world's poultry needs. Economic experts said that if bird flu is not contained in the region, it would devastate Asia's poultry industry and leave thousands of people jobless.

Scientists said that migrating birds could have introduced the virus in their droppings or passed it on to domesticated birds during stop-offs in their annual winter journeys south for the warm weather. When the birds are infected, contamination then becomes possible in humans, especially among those people who feed, touch and fondle the body and feathers of these game cocks while training and preparing them for upcoming fights.



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○ AUCTION STYLE: PARADE
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MASSEY FERGUSON 4WD
59 - BULLDOZERS
KOMATSU D80A-12
51 - WHEEL LOADERS
TCM 860
220 - DUMP TRUCKS
ISUZU CXZ DUMP TRUCK
240 - CARGO TRUCKS
ISUZU FWD CARGO
75 - WING VANS
FUSO FU WING VAN
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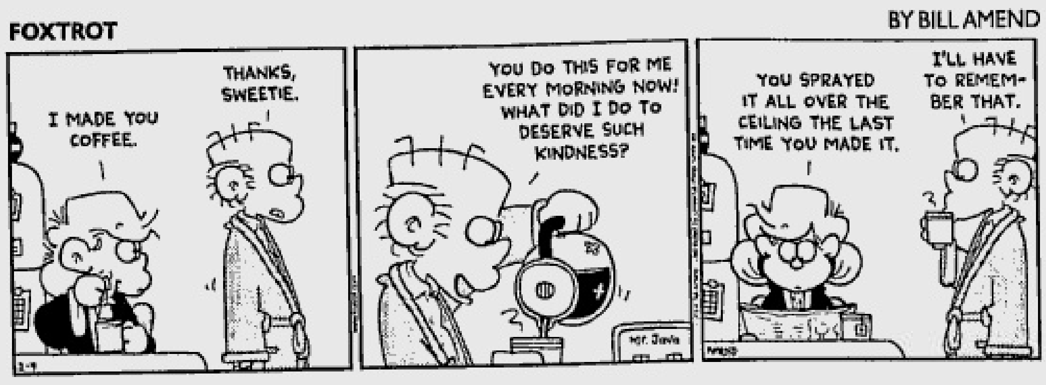
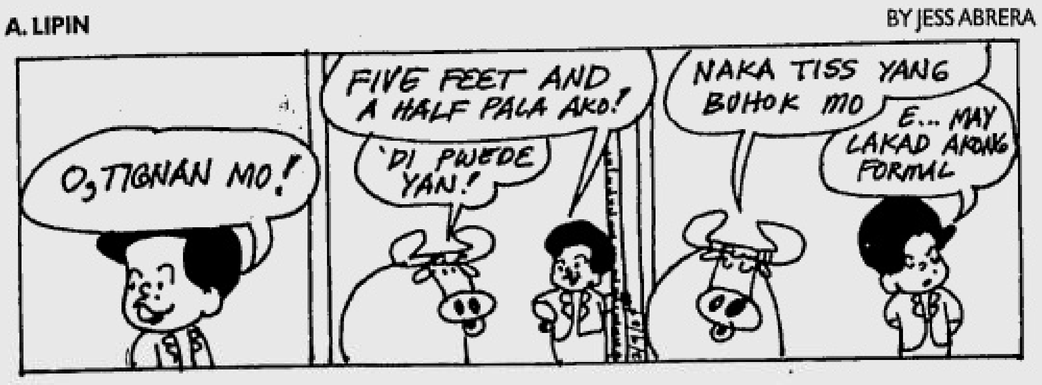
FOXTROT

BY BILL AMEND


I MADE YOU COFFEE.
THANKS, SWEETIE.
YOU DO THIS FOR ME EVERY MORNING NOW! WHAT DID I DO TO DESERVE SUCH KINDNESS?
YOU SPRAYED IT ALL OVER THE CEILING THE LAST TIME YOU MADE IT.
I'LL HAVE TO REMEMBER THAT.
Mr. Java

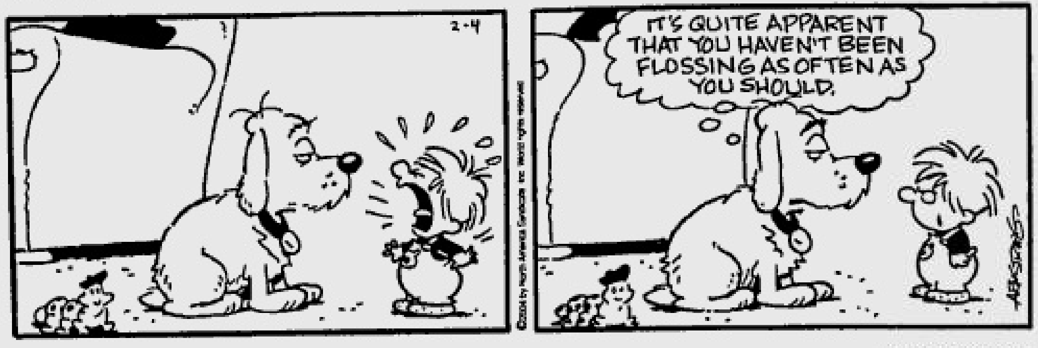
A. LIPIN

BY JESS ABRERA


O, TIGNAN MO!
FIVE FEET AND A HALF PALA AKO!
'DI PWEDE YAN!
NAKA TISS YANG BUHOK MO
E... MAY LAKAD AKONG FORMAL

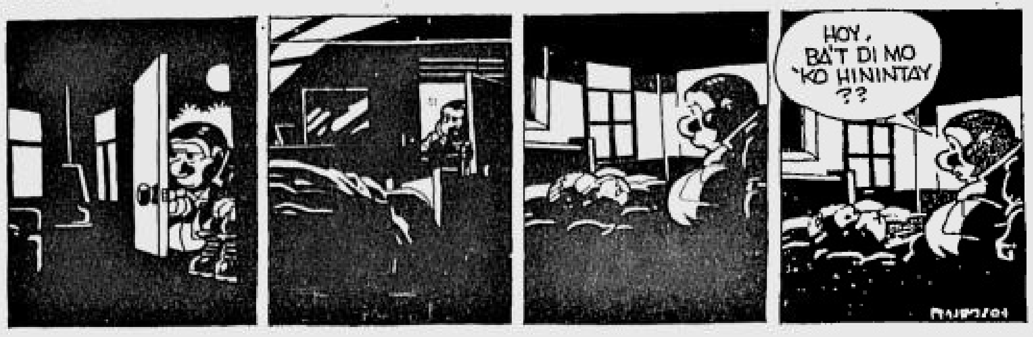
MARVIN

BY TOM ARMSTRONG


2-4
IT'S QUITE APPARENT THAT YOU HAVEN'T BEEN FLOSSING AS OFTEN AS YOU SHOULD.
ARMSTRONG

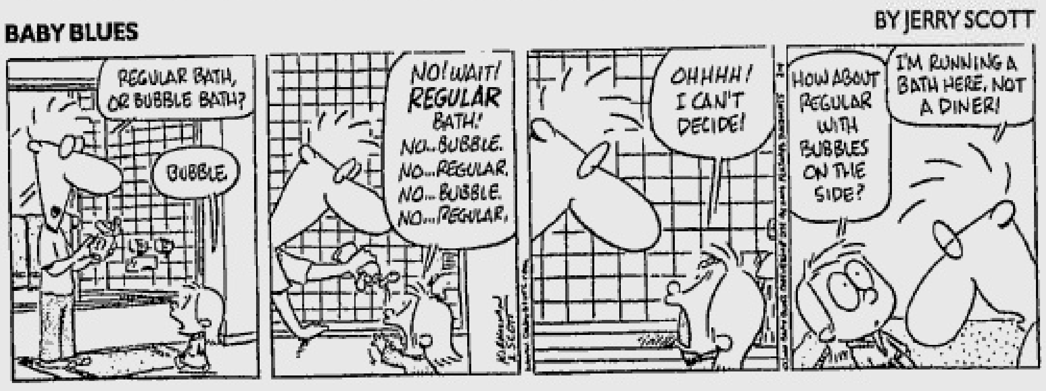
PUGAD BABOY

BY P.M. JUNIOR


HOY, BA'T DI MO 'KO HININTAY ??

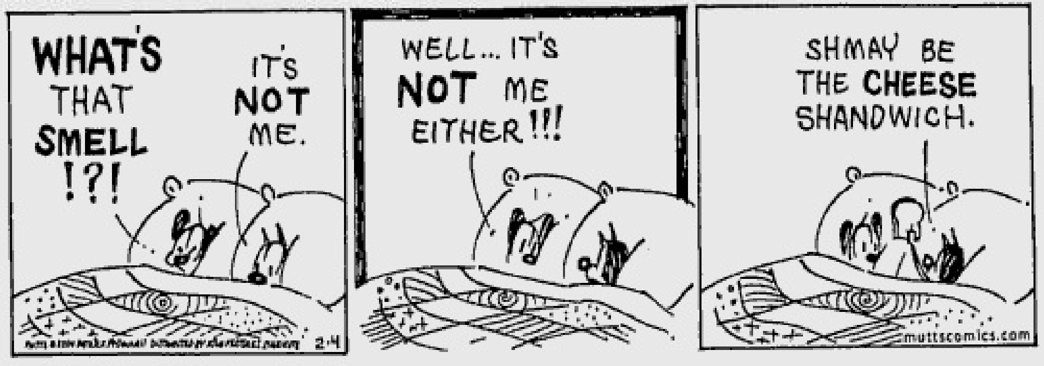
BABY BLUES

BY JERRY SCOTT


REGULAR BATH, OR BUBBLE BATH?
BUBBLE.
NO! WAIT! REGULAR BATH! NO...BUBBLE. NO...REGULAR. NO...BUBBLE. NO...REGULAR.
OHHHH! I CAN'T DECIDE!
HOW ABOUT REGULAR WITH BUBBLES ON THE SIDE?
I'M RUNNING A BATH HERE, NOT A DINER!

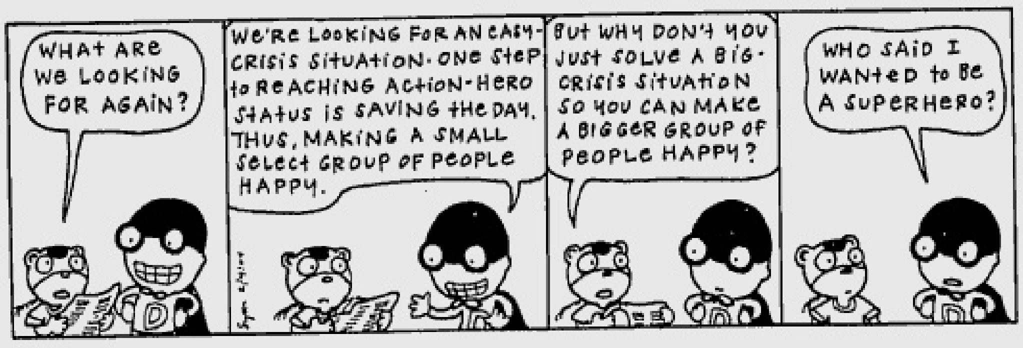
MUTTS

BY PATRICK McDONNELL


WHAT'S THAT SMELL !?!
IT'S NOT ME.
WELL... IT'S NOT ME EITHER!!!
SHMAY BE THE CHEESE SHANDWICH.
2-4
muttscomics.com

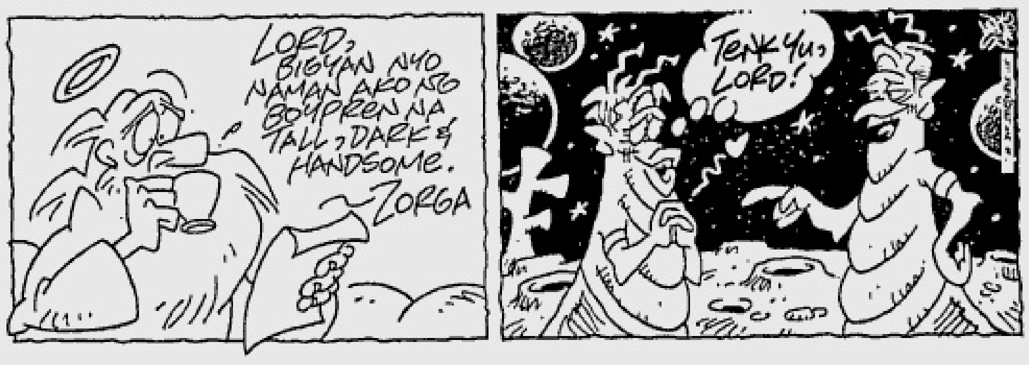
ATOMO AND WEBOY

BY LYRA GARCELLANO


WHAT ARE WE LOOKING FOR AGAIN?
WE'RE LOOKING FOR AN EASY-CRISIS SITUATION. ONE STEP TO REACHING ACTION-HERO STATUS IS SAVING THE DAY. THUS, MAKING A SMALL SELECT GROUP OF PEOPLE HAPPY.
BUT WHY DON'T YOU JUST SOLVE A BIG-CRISIS SITUATION SO YOU CAN MAKE A BIGGER GROUP OF PEOPLE HAPPY?
WHO SAID I WANTED TO BE A SUPERHERO?

DIVINE COMEDY

BY STEVEN PABALINAS


LORD, BIGYAN NYO NAMAN AKO NG BOYPREN NA TALL, DARK & HANDSOME. ~ZORGA
TENKYU, LORD!

HOROSCOPE

BY FRANCIS DRAKE

YOU BORN TODAY: You are also extremely unconventional. You always have an original, unusual way of doing things. You are most sincere in your beliefs, and you like to share them with others. You have your own system for doing things. Important choices present themselves to you this year. Choose wisely.

Birthdate of: Alice Cooper, musician; Clint Black, country singer; Chogyam Trungpa, Tibetan Buddhist teacher.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): Be extra-patient with children today. How you act is how they will learn to act. (It's what you do, not what you say that influences young minds, because they are copycats.)

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): Difficulties with a parent or boss might arise today. Why aggravate the situation? It's best to learn to live and let live. (Life is easier that way.)

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): Be careful when driving and cycling today. Minor irritations could cause distractions, which, in turn, cause accidents. One thing leads to another.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): You're not sure whether or not to spend money on something today. My advice is to listen to that little voice on your shoulder and wait until the weekend. Your hunch is right.

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): Conversations with partners and close friends might be mildly strained today. Give up your personal agenda. Don't try to convince others to agree with you. Just go with the flow.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): To do a job well, you have to believe in yourself. If you doubt yourself, you'll sabotage the situation. Decide you're going to do something—then do it. (And stick to your story.)

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): A romantic sweetheart might feel jealous of your attention to a friend. It's hard to keep everybody happy, but you also have to be considerate.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): If you have differences with someone today, they might be noticed. A public argument is possible. This doesn't promote your best interests at all. Chill out.

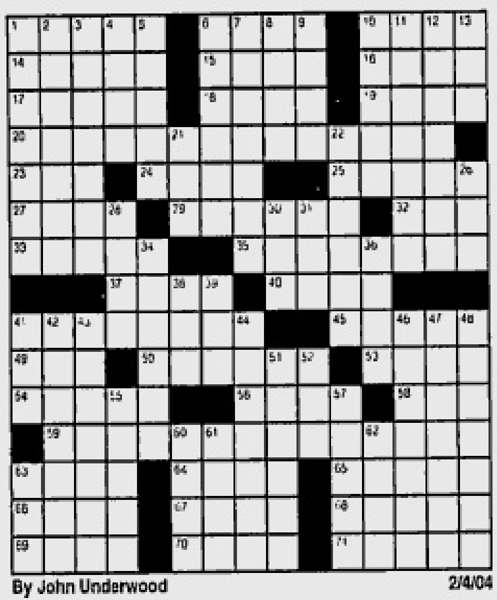
SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): Someone might oppose your publishing, travel or school plans right now. That's OK. Bide your time and strike once again another day.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): You might have trouble with your financial credit today. The approval you seek eludes you. Don't worry, try again another day. All is not lost.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): Don't get discouraged at work today. It's true that you're working hard for little appreciation; nevertheless, you get the support you want when you need it.

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): Romantic prospects look discouraging today. Suddenly, you feel unloved. This is just a passing dark cloud on your horizon. Relax. By the weekend you will feel entirely differently.

DAILY CROSSWORD



By John Underwood
New York, NY

2/4/04

ACROSS
1 Richmond's river
6 St. Louis landmark
10 Local yokel
14 In pieces
15 Gilpin of "Frasier"
16 Grandson of Eve
17 Illegal act
18 Indigo dye
19 "Back in Black" rockers
20 The whole thing?
23 __ favor, senor
24 Honolulu's island
25 Exploiters
27 Underground assets
29 Legendary Giant
32 Two-time loser to DDE
33 Ocean motions
35 Everything
37 Small particle
40 Long, narrow cut
41 All out
45 Masonic doorkeeper
49 Saturn model
50 Hale and hearty
53 Tractor-trailer
54 New to the game
56 Image of a god
58 Bridge action
59 All-inclusive
63 "Nana" star
64 Translucent gem
65 Atoll foundation
66 "__ kleine Nachtmusik"
67 Subdivision division
68 Govt. bond
69 Barracks beds
70 Husky sound
71 Wind indicators

DOWN
1 Big payoff
2 Deductive
3 Restaurant employee
4 Ms. Bombeck
5 Secretarial skill
6 Cochise or Geronimo
7 French auto maker
8 Baby's bed
9 Hawaiian city
10 Enjoys a novel
11 Fuzzy
12 "10" star
13 PC key
21 Beaver project
22 Surpass in cunning
26 Air-leak sound
28 Tight closure
30 Expressions of surprise
31 Part of GTE
34 Buffet tray warmer
36 Singer Redding
38 Ah, I see!
39 Unruly crowd
41 Purchased hair
42 Friend of Hamlet
43 Penny's worth
44 Clapton's axes
46 Former Chrysler model
47 Abu Dhabi or Fujairah
48 Conundrums
51 Lug laboriously
52 Shoe's tip
55 Sea eagles
57 "Law & Order" network
60 Skyrocket
61 Shelter for strays
62 One of the Chaplins
63 Part of a min.

Tuesday's Puzzle Solved

L	A	P	P	■	V	I	S	T	A	■	A	R	E	A
A	X	L	E	■	I	D	L	E	S	■	C	O	A	L
S	M	A	R	T	M	O	U	T	H	■	C	U	R	L
S	E	N	S	E	■	S	E	R	E	■	U	G	L	Y
O	N	E	I	L	L	■	D	A	N	I	S	H	■	■
■	■	■	S	L	E	W	■	■	■	B	E	N	C	H
D	E	B	T	■	M	O	U	S	S	E	■	E	L	I
E	L	L	■	B	O	R	S	C	H	T	■	C	O	T
M	A	O	■	E	N	D	E	A	R	■	S	K	Y	S
I	N	C	A	S	■	■	■	B	U	S	T	■	■	■
■	■	K	I	S	S	E	S	■	G	I	A	N	T	S
B	O	H	R	■	O	G	L	E	■	F	L	I	R	T
A	P	E	D	■	P	R	I	V	A	T	E	E	Y	E
B	E	A	R	■	H	E	M	E	N	■	S	C	O	W
A	N	D	Y	■	S	T	E	R	N	■	T	E	N	S

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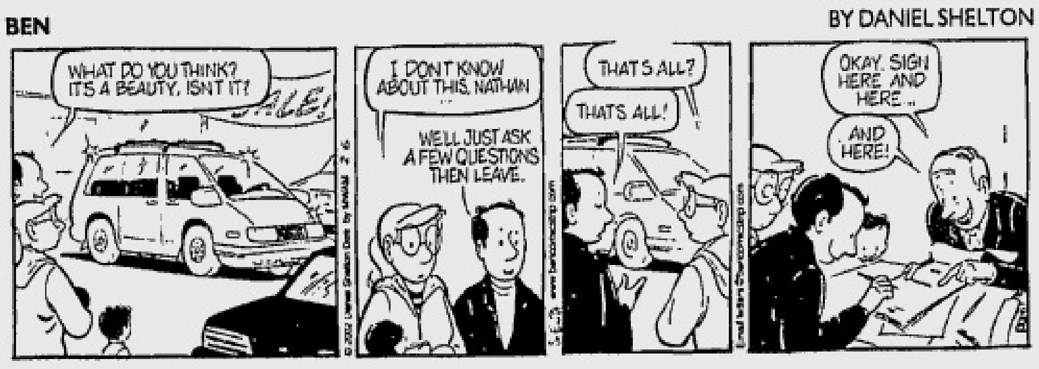
2/4/04

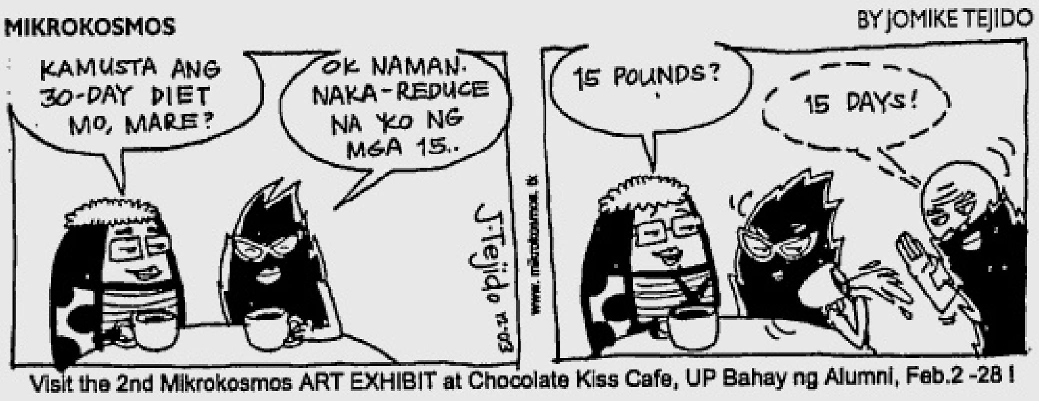
BEN

BY DANIEL SHELTON


WHAT DO YOU THINK? IT'S A BEAUTY, ISN'T IT?
SALE!
I DON'T KNOW ABOUT THIS, NATHAN
WE'LL JUST ASK A FEW QUESTIONS THEN LEAVE.
THAT'S ALL?
THAT'S ALL!
OKAY. SIGN HERE AND HERE...
AND HERE!

MIKROKOSMOS

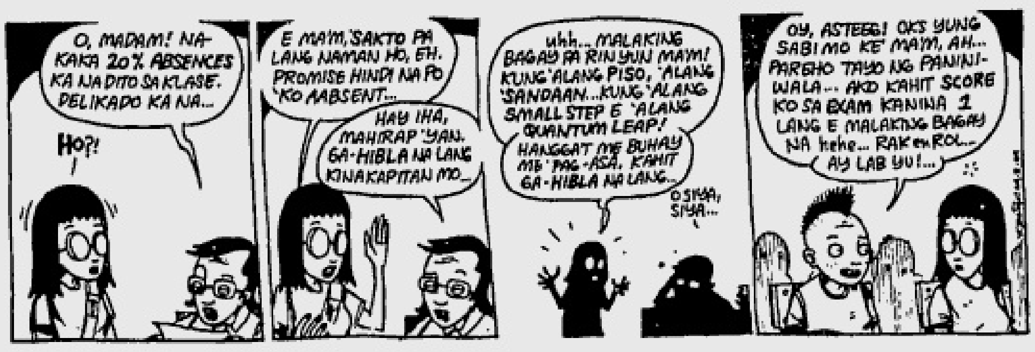
BY JOMIKE TEJIDO


KAMUSTA ANG 30-DAY DIET MO, MARE?
OK NAMAN. NAKA-REDUCE NA 'KO NG MGA 15..
J. Tejido
15 POUNDS?
15 DAYS!

Visit the 2nd Mikrokosmos ART EXHIBIT at Chocolate Kiss Cafe, UP Bahay ng Alumni, Feb.2 -28 !

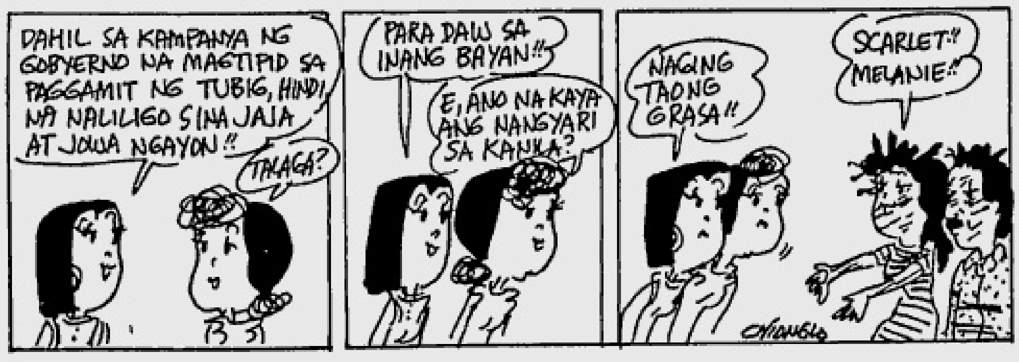
KIKO MACHINE

BY MANIX ABRERA


O, MADAM! NAKAKA 20% ABSENCES KA NA DITO SA KLASE. DELIKADO KA NA...
HO?!
E MA'M, 'SAKTO PA LANG NAMAN HO, EH. PROMISE HINDI NA PO 'KO AABSENT...
HAY IHA, MAHIRAP 'YAN. GA-HIBLA NA LANG KINAKAPITAN MO...
uhh... MALAKING BAGAY PA RIN YUN MA'M! KUNG 'ALANG PISO, 'ALANG 'SANDAAN...KUNG 'ALANG SMALL STEP E 'ALANG QUANTUM LEAP! HANGGAT ME BUHAY ME 'PAG-ASA. KAHIT GA-HIBLA NA LANG...
O SIYA, SIYA...
OY, ASTEEG! OKS YUNG SABI MO KE' MA'M, AH... PAREHO TAYO NG PANINIWALA... AKO KAHIT SCORE KO SA EXAM KANINA 1 LANG E MALAKING BAGAY NA hehe... RAK en ROL... AY LAB YU!...

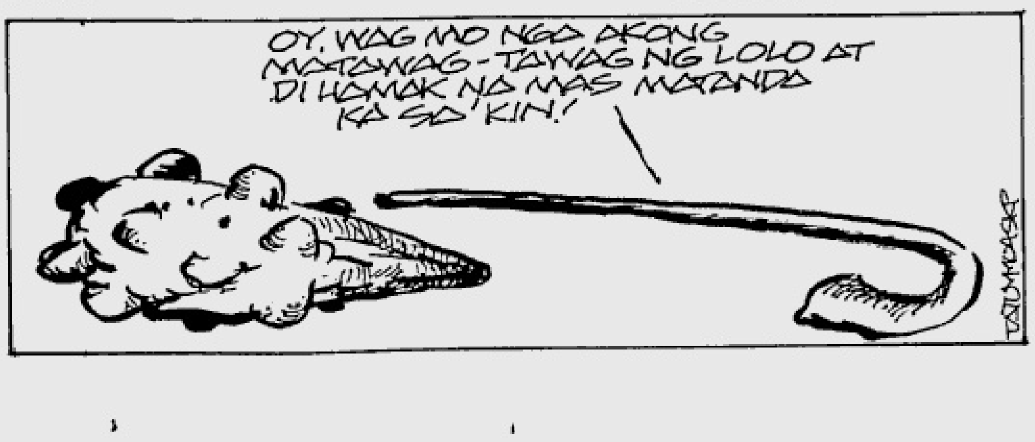
LOVEKNOTS

BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO


DAHIL SA KAMPANYA NG GOBYERNO NA MAGTIPID SA PAGGAMIT NG TUBIG, HINDI NA NALILIGO SINA JAJA AT JOWA NGAYON!!
TALAGA?
PARA DAW SA INANG BAYAN!!
E, ANO NA KAYA ANG NANGYARI SA KANILA?
NAGING TAONG GRASA!!
SCARLET!!
MELANIE!!
CHIONGLO

TULDOK

BY PAPU AND TATUM MILAMBILING


OY, WAG MO NGA AKONG MATAWAG-TAWAG NG LOLO AT 'DI HAMAK NA MAS MATANDA KA SA 'KIN!
TATUMCASAP

Pop singer flies high

THE CENTER for Pop Music Philippines Inc. has named recording artist Nina as its Singing Ambassador of Goodwill 2004.

The singer was presented in a concert hosted by Department of Tourism's WOW Philippines. The concert, "Fly High Nina!" was held last Jan. 27 at the Buluarte Plano Luneta de Sta. Isabel, Intramuros, Manila.

As a singing ambassador of goodwill, Nina will officially represent the Center for Pop Music Philippines in various goodwill functions.

NINA

Regine Tolentino does a Jane Fonda

From page A31

"It is very MTV with strong influences from J. Lo, Britney Spears and Cristina Aguillera. If you are a dancer, it is quite easy to create your own dance steps. I made sure that the dance steps could easily be followed by the bagets (youth) who would buy the video."

For the dance workouts, Regine is supported by the Myxx Dancers and the Mustang girls.

A bonus treat comes in the form of a daring solo dance number that Regine performs with wild abandon. The number might come across as hot and sizzling, but Regine claims she has set limits to how sexy she would go.

No competition

"I can't compete with other showgirls," she says. "*Hanggang* wet look *lang ako* (I will only go as far as the wet look). All that you're going to see is me dancing in a sexy outfit."

Regine continues: "Dancing is good therapy. In this production number, I was instructed by the director to dance because I want to release something. The fact is, I really love to dance, and I have never thought that this would mean I am releasing all my anger and frustration in my life.

Hardest part

"The beat of the music is inviting enough to send me to the dance floor," she says.

Regine is now in the roster of GMA artists as well as part of GMA News and Public Affairs.

The morning news program "Unang Hirit" keeps her busy appearing with two daily segments.

"The hardest part is waking up early in the morning," she says. "I also co-host a contest portion in 'Eat Bulaga.' For the drama anthology 'Magpakailanman,' I finished taping the life story of Joy Concio.

No ending

"It was fun portraying Joy since we both love to dance. The dramatization is lighthearted, but I like it since I am not sure if I'm ready for heavy drama," she adds.

We tell Regine that her own life story would be perfect for the true-life television series.

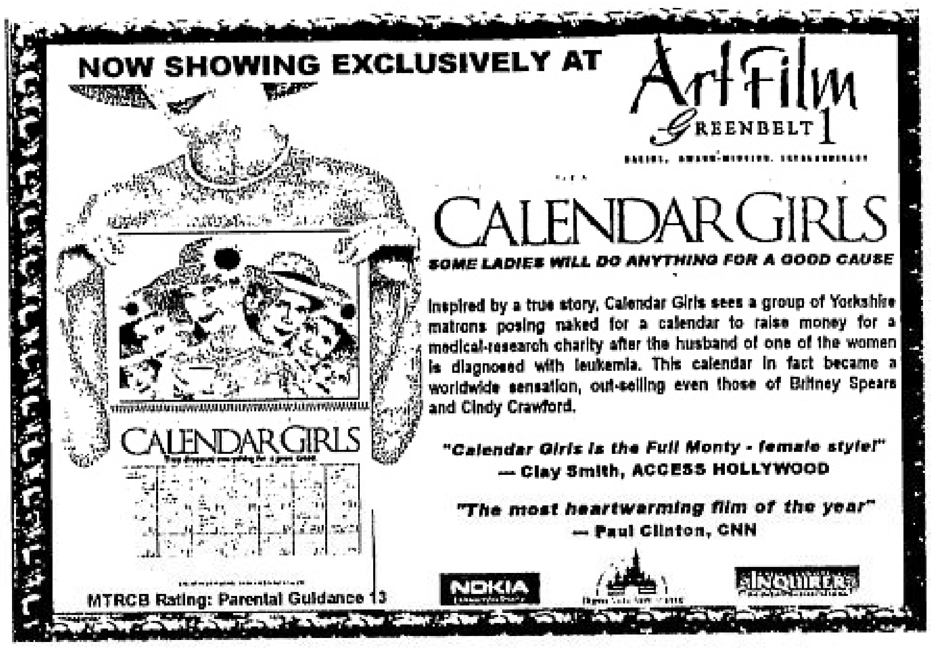
"You think so? But it has no ending yet so that's not yet possible," says Regine, the mother of two children.

"Really now, is my life really that colorful?"

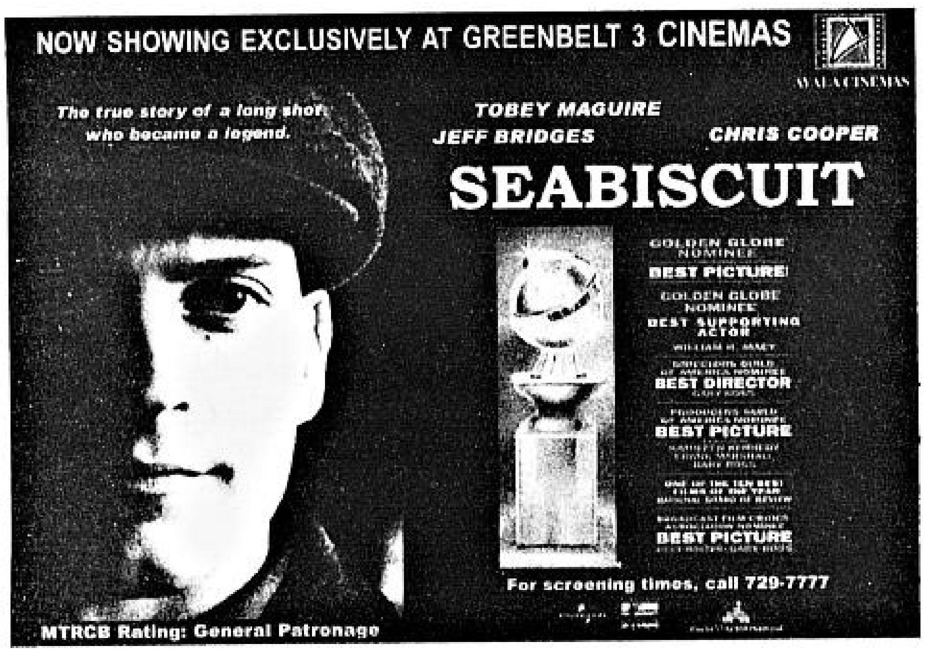
Asked if she and Lander are now living together, Regine replied in the negative.

"But our communication lines are open," she adds. "We talk a lot now. I informed him about the dance video I did for Viva, but I did not tell him what I did."

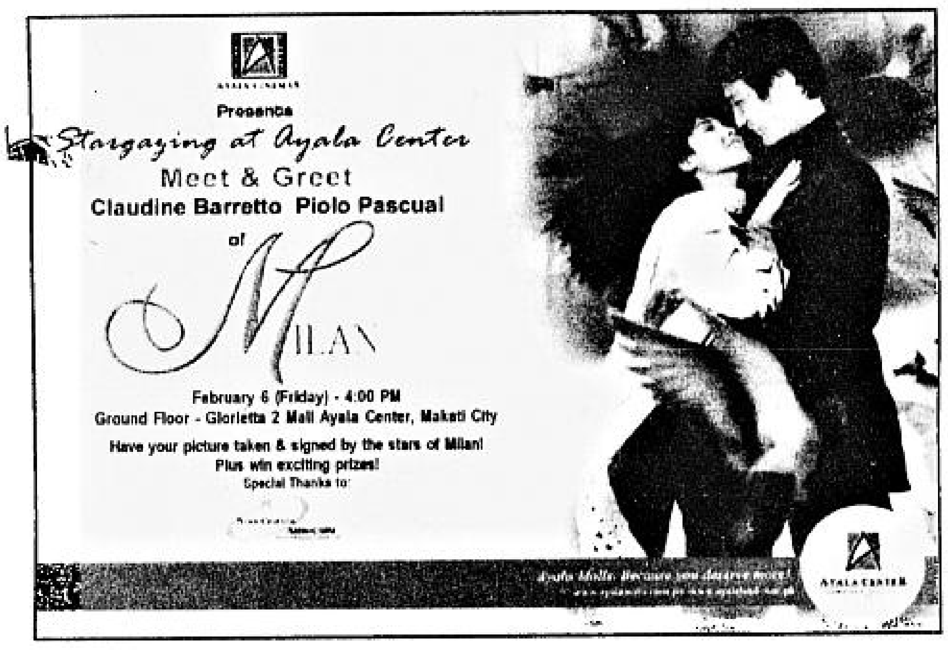
That should send Lander running all the way to the nearest music shop.



NOW SHOWING EXCLUSIVELY AT
ArtFilm
Greenbelt 1
CALENDAR GIRLS
SOME LADIES WILL DO ANYTHING FOR A GOOD CAUSE
Inspired by a true story, Calendar Girls sees a group of Yorkshire matrons posing naked for a calendar to raise money for a medical-research charity after the husband of one of the women is diagnosed with leukemia. This calendar in fact became a worldwide sensation, out-selling even those of Britney Spears and Cindy Crawford.
"Calendar Girls is the Full Monty - female style!"
— Clay Smith, ACCESS HOLLYWOOD
"The most heartwarming film of the year"
— Paul Clinton, CNN
MTRCB Rating: Parental Guidance 13
NOKIA
INQUIRER



NOW SHOWING EXCLUSIVELY AT GREENBELT 3 CINEMAS
AYALA CINEMAS
The true story of a long shot who became a legend.
TOBEY MAGUIRE
JEFF BRIDGES
CHRIS COOPER
SEABISCUIT
GOLDEN GLOBE NOMINEE
BEST PICTURE!
GOLDEN GLOBE NOMINEE
BEST SUPPORTING ACTOR
WILLIAM H. MACY
DIRECTORS GUILD OF AMERICA NOMINEE
BEST DIRECTOR
PRODUCERS GUILD OF AMERICA NOMINEE
BEST PICTURE
ONE OF THE TEN BEST FILMS OF THE YEAR
NATIONAL BOARD OF REVIEW
BROADCAST FILM CRITICS ASSOCIATION NOMINEE
BEST PICTURE
For screening times, call 729-7777
MTRCB Rating: General Patronage



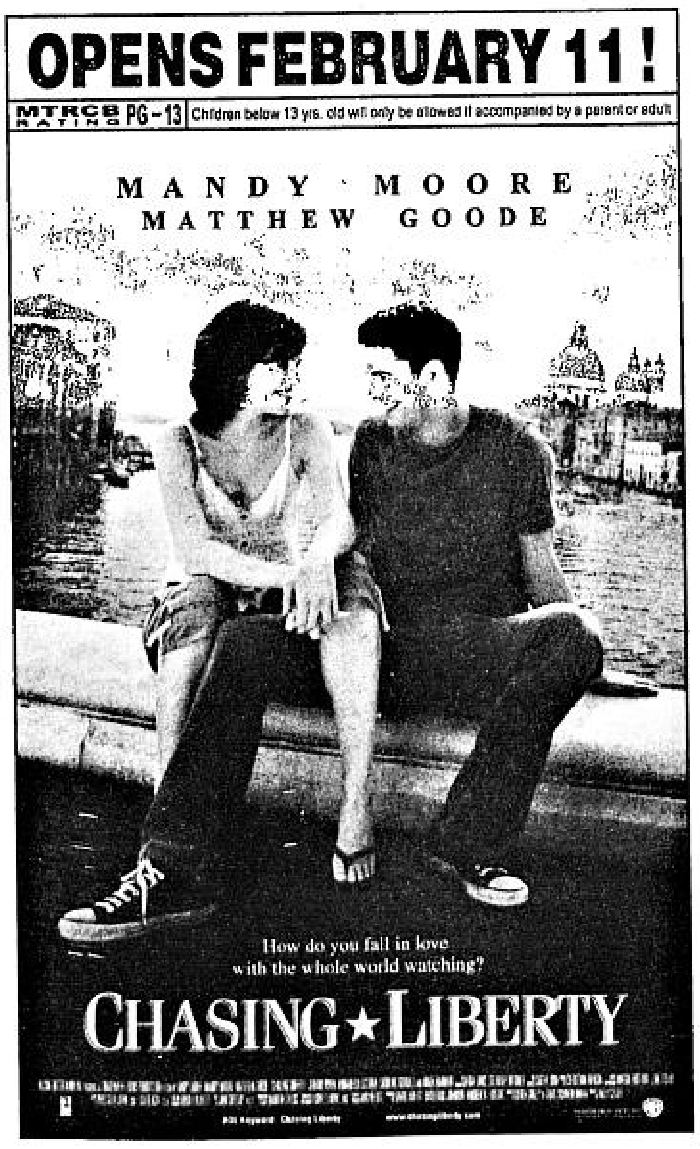
AYALA CINEMAS
Presents
Stargazing at Ayala Center
Meet & Greet
Claudine Barretto Piolo Pascual
of
MILAN
February 6 (Friday) - 4:00 PM
Ground Floor - Glorietta 2 Mall Ayala Center, Makati City
Have your picture taken & signed by the stars of Milan!
Plus win exciting prizes!
Special Thanks to:
Ayala Malls. Because you deserve more!
AYALA CENTER

SECOND WEEK!
MTRCB RATING ▶ GP | FOR GENERAL PATRONAGE ALL AGES ADMITTED
"A Disney Classic In The Tradition Of 'The Lion King'!"
Jimmy Carter, NBC-TV
Disney Presents
BROTHER BEAR
disney.com/brotherbear
©Disney Enterprises, Inc.
Distributed by Buena Vista International thru Columbia Pictures

julia roberts
now showing
at
Robinsons Movieworld Cinemas
february 4
for screening time,
pls. call our movie access no:
635-555
mona lisa smile
MTRCB Rating:
PG 13
MOVIEWORLD

MTRCB RATING ▶ PG-13 | Children below 13 yrs. old will only be allowed if accompanied by a parent or adult
julia roberts
mona lisa smile
Julia Roberts dazzles in 'Mona Lisa Smile'
Ladies, give yourselves a special treat, and bring your sisters, classmates, girlfriends, Mom, or even a date, to see Julia's new movie.
Academy Award®-winner Julia Roberts heads a powerhouse cast with today's hot young Hollywood actresses - Kirsten Dunst (*Spider-Man*) and Julia Stiles (*Save the Last Dance, 10 Things I Hate About You*) - in an uplifting, heart-wrenching, and often-times funny drama.
Julia Roberts stars as Katherine, a teacher who challenges her bright female students, and discovers herself along the way.
Mike Newell, director of romantic comedy *Four Weddings & a Funeral*, megs a must-see movie to capture your heart and put a smile on your face.
Warming hearts at a theatre near you
OPENS TODAY!

SPOOKY FUN ADVENTURE
STARTS FEBRUARY 11!
MTRCB RATING ▶ G General Patronage | ALL AGES ADMITTED
EDDIE MURPHY
THE CLAIRVOYANT
Walt Disney Pictures Presents
the Haunted Mansion
YOUR FUTURE WOULD BE IN GOOD HANDS... IF SHE HAD ANY
Walt Disney Pictures
Distributed by Buena Vista International thru Columbia Pictures



OPENS FEBRUARY 11!
MTRCB RATING PG-13 | Children below 13 yrs. old will only be allowed if accompanied by a parent or adult
MANDY MOORE
MATTHEW GOODE
How do you fall in love with the whole world watching?
CHASING ★ LIBERTY

3RD WEEK
MTRCB RATING ▶ PG-13
Hurry! Experience for the last time on the big screen the final episode of the highly-acclaimed and much-awarded LOTR trilogy.
11 ACADEMY AWARD NOMINATIONS
BEST PICTURE
BEST DIRECTOR–PETER JACKSON
BEST ADAPTED SCREENPLAY–FRAN WALSH & PHILIPPA BOYENS & PETER JACKSON
BEST ORIGINAL SCORE–HOWARD SHORE
BEST ORIGINAL SONG–"INTO THE WEST" PERFORMED BY ANNIE LENNOX
WINNER 4 GOLDEN GLOBE AWARDS
BEST PICTURE
BEST DIRECTOR–PETER JACKSON
— WINNER — BEST PICTURE
— WINNER — BEST DIRECTOR PETER JACKSON
— WINNER — BEST ACTING BY AN ENSEMBLE
— WINNER — BEST COMPOSER HOWARD SHORE
Writers Guild Of America NOMINEE – BEST ADAPTED SCREENPLAY FRAN WALSH & PHILIPPA BOYENS & PETER JACKSON
Screen Actors Guild NOMINEE OUTSTANDING PERFORMANCE BY A CAST
Directors Guild Of America NOMINEE BEST DIRECTOR – PETER JACKSON
"THE CINEMATIC EPIC OF OUR TIME, THE ONE BY WHICH ALL OTHERS WILL BE JUDGED."
-Kenneth Turan, LOS ANGELES TIMES
WOOD McKELLEN TYLER MORTENSEN ASTIN
THE LORD OF THE RINGS
THE RETURN OF THE KING

More movies on pages A30, B14 and B15

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

ABBA in Manila retro music party

ABBA in Manila for retro music party

SHOW TIME

THROUGHOUT the history of popular music, rock's super groups had usually emerged either from the US or the UK.

Not until the Swedish quartet ABBA hit the world pop scene in 1974, shortly after they performed the song "Waterloo" at the Eurovision Song Contest, a forum notorious for producing one-hit wonders.

ABBA, however, was not headed for oblivion, breaking the one-hit wonder jinx of the Eurovision Song Contest.

The four Swedes were years ahead of their time. For example, few Americans realize that ABBA pioneered the art of music video nearly a decade before MTV.

Acclaimed lyricist Tim Rice once said, "They were underrated by serious critics and treated as just a bouncy little pop group. A lot of idiots still think of them as that, but they were much more."

Rice's admiration for the group grew when ABBA co-founders Bjorn Ulvaeus and Benny Andersson co-wrote the acclaimed hit musical "Chess" in 1984, a few years after the group's breakup.

Ulvaeus, ABBA's main songwriter, was fond of saying that there is more to music than 'Git down, baaay-bee!' when critics berated ABBA's melodic sound. Even ABBA's flamboyant outfits were reviled by the press.

But despite that, the baggy pants, oversized tops and capri leggings, which the group brought beyond the fashion runways, have become staple wardrobes in women's closets. This again proves that ABBA was attuned with the future. The group also refused to let critics pressure it into looking back.

Here in the country for shows on Feb. 13 at 8:30 p.m. at the Waterfront in Cebu City, and on Feb. 14 at 8:30 p.m. at the PSC-Ultra in Pasig City, ABBA will bring back the magic and nostalgia of the '70s, one of the most glorious periods of pop music.

Fans can relive the group's music in these shows called "ABBA–The Music: A Valentine Retro Concert Party."

Food and drink booths will be set up in the venues.

ABBA, which is now composed of Katja Nord, Camilla Dahlin, Martin Hakansson and Henrik Olsson, will be performing the group's hits such as "Dancing Queen," "The Winner Takes It All: Thank You For The Music," "Knowing Me, Knowing You," "Fernando," "Take A Chance On Me," "Chiquitita," "The Name of the Game," among many more hits.

"ABBA–The Music: A Valentine Retro Party" is produced by ALV Events International.

For ticket reservations, call 633-98-25 to 27 or Ticketnet outlets at 911-5555.

Stella Ruiz Pen shows extended

ACOUSTIC nights with Stella Ruiz at the Manila Peninsula's Conservatory have been extended.

Stella will perform three sets every Tuesday night until Feb. 24.

The sexy singer first made waves in movies, starring in several bold films, including "Sambahin Mo Ang Katawan Ko," her first starring role, which earned for her a nomination in the Star Awards for movies.

But singing is Stella's first love, the actress confides.

"My friends have always told me that I should try singing even before I entered the movie business," she says.

"But singing took a back seat when I was busy with movies. Now, I am finally able to do the thing that I love most, which is to sing."

Stella studied voice and guitar lessons to hone her craft. She also jammed with respected musicians in the country.

In her repertoire, Stella combines slow and fast songs for a riveting performance.

Stella will also perform at the Oyster Bar in Rockwell on Feb. 4, 11, 18 and 25; at the Synchopado in Malate on Feb. 5, 12, 19, 26. She also has a Valentine show on Feb. 14 at the Rembrandt Hotel in Quezon City.

'Bio-data' ...

From page A31

"Ping" Lacson, former education secretary Raul Roco, preacher Eddie Villanueva of the Jesus is Lord Movement.

Last night, the show focused on actor Fernando Poe Jr.

In a press forum at the Manila Hotel last week, Abalos had said it was not yet time to introduce the presidential candidates.

"There would be a time for that. Let's introduce them within the 90 days campaign period," Abalos said in that forum.

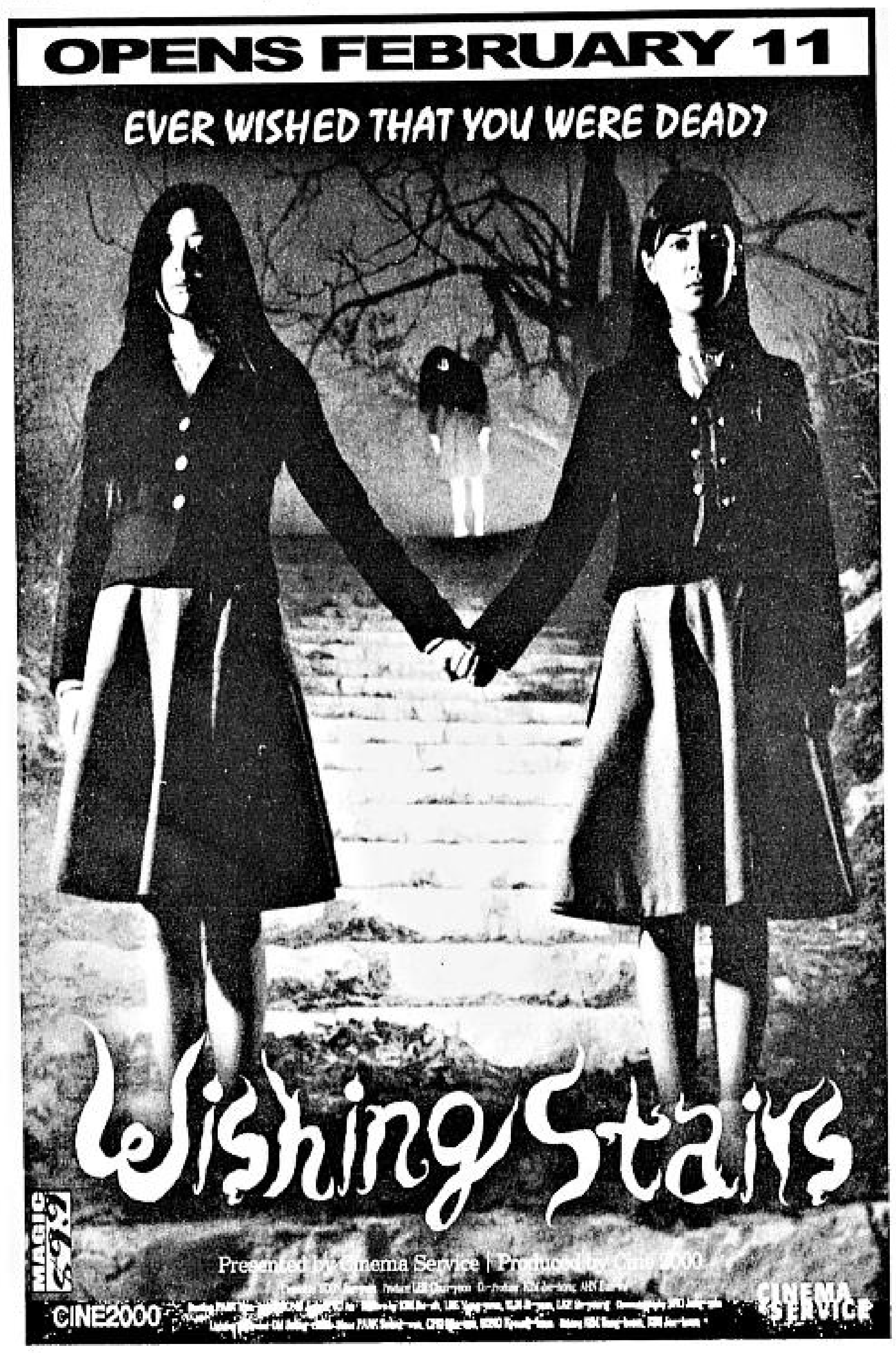
Perez said in the GMA 7 statement that "Bio-data' is not designed to promote the election or defeat of any candidate."

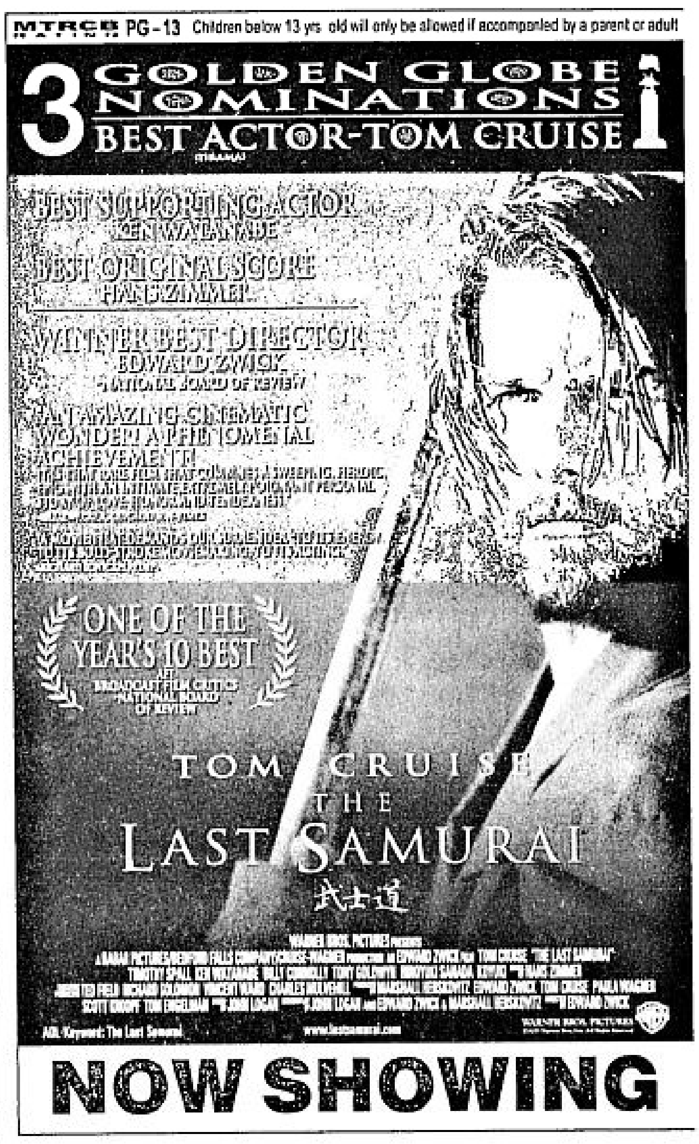
He said the show features all Comelec-qualified presidential and vice-presidential candidates and focuses on their family background, education, career history, wealth, personal traits and their stand on issues.

"It was designed, conceptualized, and produced exclusively by GMA News and Public Affairs department, which is not aligned with any candidate or political group or coalition," Perez added in the statement.

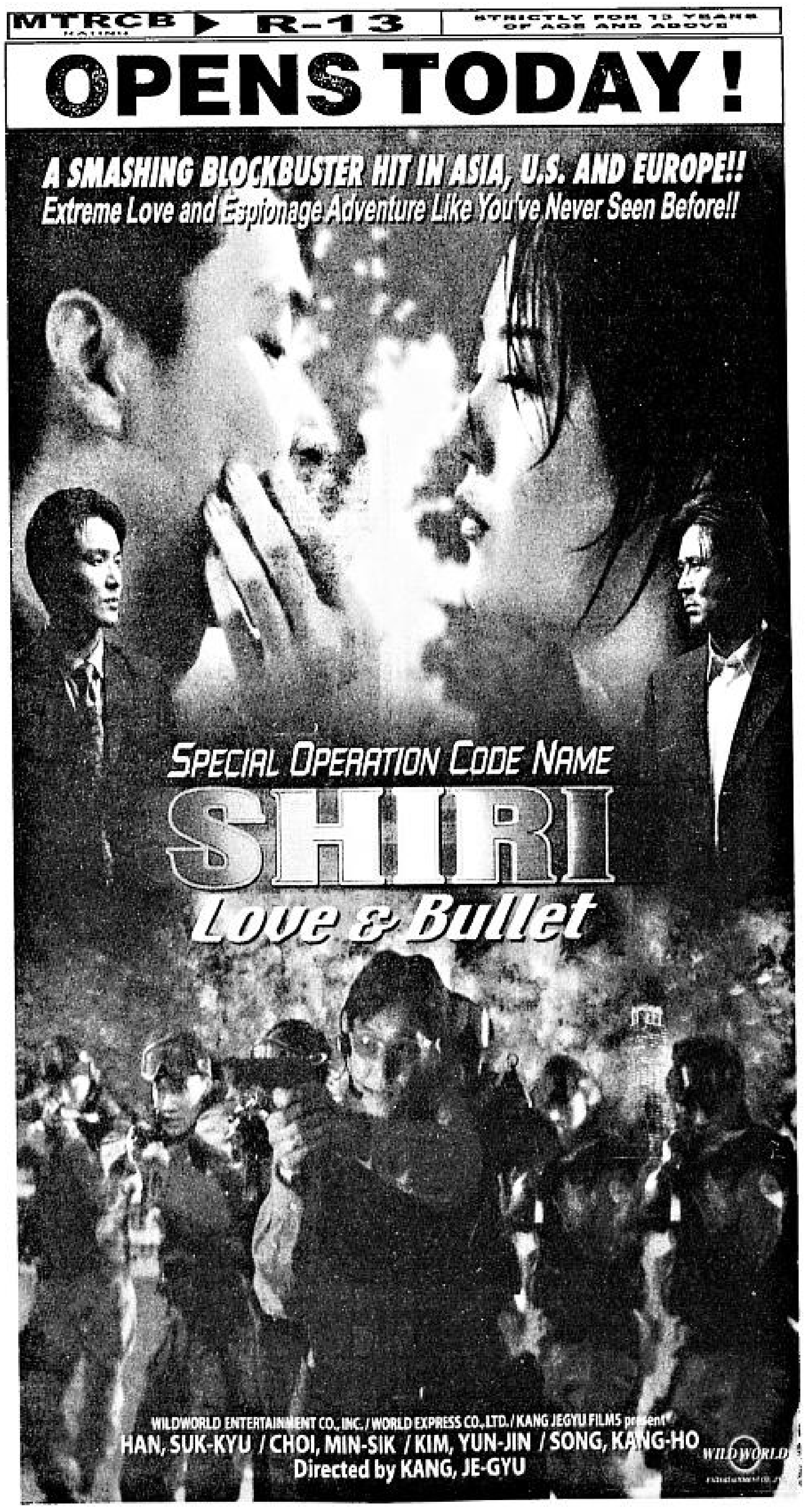
He emphasized that "Bio-data" does not air speeches, announcements, or commentaries for or against a candidate.

"The candidates' statements concerning their candidacy or their stand on issues are merely incidental to the story and are not intended by the program to solicit votes," Perez stressed in the statement.


OPENS FEBRUARY 11
EVER WISHED THAT YOU WERE DEAD?
Wishing Stairs
Presented by Cinema Service | Produced by Cine 2000
CINE2000
CINEMA SERVICE
MAGIC 579


MTRCB PG-13 Children below 13 yrs. old will only be allowed if accompanied by a parent or adult
3 GOLDEN GLOBE NOMINATIONS
BEST ACTOR-TOM CRUISE
BEST SUPPORTING ACTOR KEN WATANABE
BEST ORIGINAL SCORE HANS ZIMMER
WINNER BEST DIRECTOR EDWARD ZWICK NATIONAL BOARD OF REVIEW
AN AMAZING CINEMATIC WONDER! A PHENOMENAL ACHIEVEMENT!
ONE OF THE YEAR'S 10 BEST
BROADCAST FILM CRITICS NATIONAL BOARD OF REVIEW
TOM CRUISE
THE LAST SAMURAI
武士道
WARNER BROS. PICTURES
www.lastsamurai.com
NOW SHOWING

MTRCB R-18 Strictly for ADULTS No one below 18 yrs. old may be admitted
OPENS TODAY!
Based on the bestselling novel by SUSANNA MOORE
"An erotic thriller capable of inducing nightmares and guaranteed to shock even hard boiled audiences." -The Miami Herald
A serial killer who cannot be caught.
A woman who knows too much.
A detective who hides a secret.
MEG RYAN
MARK RUFFALO
KEVIN BACON
JENNIFER JASON LEIGH
IN THE CUT
A film by Jane Campion
MAGIC 579


MTRCB R-13 STRICTLY FOR 13 YEARS OF AGE AND ABOVE
OPENS TODAY!
A SMASHING BLOCKBUSTER HIT IN ASIA, U.S. AND EUROPE!!
Extreme Love and Espionage Adventure Like You've Never Seen Before!!
SPECIAL OPERATION CODE NAME
SHIRI
Love & Bullet
WILDWORLD ENTERTAINMENT CO., INC. / WORLD EXPRESS CO., LTD. / KANG JEGYU FILMS present
HAN, SUK-KYU / CHOI, MIN-SIK / KIM, YUN-JIN / SONG, KANG-HO
Directed by KANG, JE-GYU
WILDWORLD

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ENTERTAINMENT

E-mail: pr_entertainment@inquirer.com.ph
Editor Louie C. Camino

GMA 7 TELLS COMELEC

'Bio-data' not electioneering

Marinel R. Cruz

GMA 7 has defended the airing of its public affairs program "Bio-Data," which takes an in-depth look at presidential candidates, their background and platform of government, after Commission on Elections Chair Benjamin Abalos questioned the airing of the program for premature electioneering.

Abalos had said the show promotes candidates before the start of the official campaign period on Feb. 10.

In a statement sent to INQUIRER Entertainment, Dick Perez, GMA Network assistant vice president for legal affairs, said the airing of "Bio-data" could not be considered premature electioneering because the program is "neither an election campaign nor a partisan political activity."

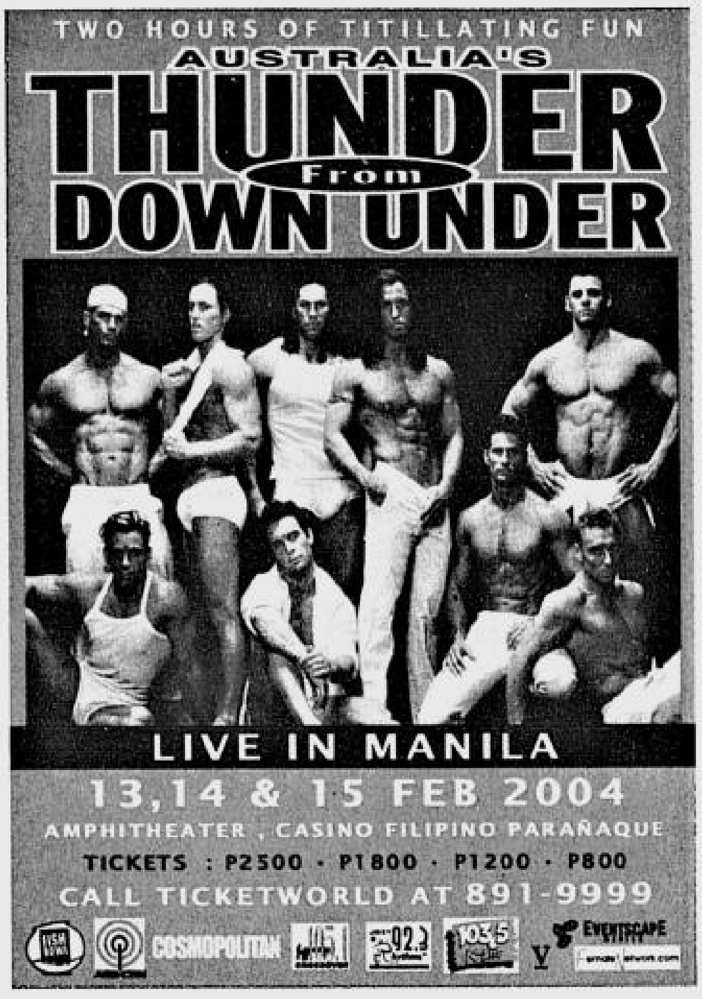
The Comelec sent GMA 7 a letter requesting the network to comply with the Fair Elections Act or Republic Act No. 9006, or face appropriate sanctions.

But Perez, in the GMA 7 statement, cited Section 79 of the Omnibus Election Code, which defines the terms "election campaign" or "partisan political activity" as an act designed to promote the election or defeat of a particular candidate.

He said the acts include forming organizations or groups, holding political conferences, making speeches, announcements or commentaries, publishing or distributing campaign materials, and other direct or indirect acts for the purpose of soliciting votes or undertaking any campaign for or against a candidate.

"Bio-data," which airs for an hour every Tuesday night, has featured opposition Sen. Panfilo

GMA 7/ A30



TWO HOURS OF TITILLATING FUN
AUSTRALIA'S
THUNDER From DOWN UNDER
LIVE IN MANILA
13,14 & 15 FEB 2004
AMPHITHEATER , CASINO FILIPINO PARAÑAQUE
TICKETS : P2500 · P1800 · P1200 · P800
CALL TICKETWORLD AT 891-9999
COSMOPOLITAN
EVENTSCAPE

Regine Tolentino does a Jane Fonda

REGINE as dancing queen

By Remy M. Umerez

THE LAST time Regine Tolentino was seen dancing to seduce a man was in the lay-out of a forgettable movie she starred in opposite Ronnie Ricketts.

During the promo period of that movie, Regine had admitted that her marriage with inactive actor Lander Vera Perez was on the rocks. That was about two years ago.

Blackwell's list

Early this month, we are chatting again with Regine, who is wearing an outfit that would surely land her in Blackwell's worst dressed list.

She is also looking like a babe, and we wonder if she's Viva's newest hot babe.

No, there is no new movie that Regine can boast off. Nor is she the latest recruit of the film company's sexy ensemble.

Dance aerobics

But Regine has released a dance video called "Sensual Dancing . . . Bounce with Regine Tolentino," where she is seen dancing energetically the latest and coolest dance steps under the direction of Jon Ilagan.

The word "sensual" in the title already implies that this is more than the usual instructional dance video. In that sense, the CD does not disappoint. The former cheerleader delivers a performance that she describes as dance aerobics.

Modern Jane Fonda

"It is a modern version of what Jane Fonda did before," says Regine. "I personally designed the clothes I wore in the video and chose the music I would dance to.

REGINE/ A30

Boob-tube booboos

VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre

HOST: How did you like participating in the benefit fun run last week?

Guest: Oh, it was really fun!

Host: But, how come you did not finish the race?

Guest: *Kasi, sumakit na ang aking sapatos!*

(Your poor - shoes?)

***

Host: In conclusion, what do you want to say to our viewers about nation-building and reestablishing our focus as a nation?

Guest: *Gusto ko sanang liwanagin ang ilang bagay, tulad ng napaka-importante na ang* goals *natin* as a nation *ay maliwanag!*

(*Tama na, nasisilaw na kami sa sobrang liwanag mo—at paliwanag!*)

***

Host: Is it true that you did not even study high school?

Guest: Yes, but I got 12 years of education.

Host: How?

Guest: I kept failing, so I took my grade school studies twice!

(Cute.)

***

Host: Is there any hope for our country? Can we still get our act together as a nation?

Guest: Sad to say, the time has running out. As a matter of fact, it's worse: the time has runned out!

(Has running out? Has runned out? There is no hope!)

***

Host: Will business pick up this year? What do you predict?

Guest: It will pick up later, in the year, but not for now. In fact, traditionally, *yang* February, lean season *talaga, at* shorts *ang* months *niya*.

(Ah, please repeat?)

***

Host: What is your advice to young viewers out there who want a good future?

Guest? If you study hard, you can be a good professionist!

(*Ay*, professionist!)

***

Host: Why do you think you should be chosen as winner of this beauty contest?

Guest: Because I'm proud of myself, for because I born being a beautiful!

(*Ano daw?*)

***

Host: Will you tell them about our prizes on the show today?

Co-host: Oh, we have lots—for example, a lucky caller will get aircon from Astrovision!

Host:—Ah,no, it's actually a DVD copy of the movie "Con-Air," starring Nicolas Cage!

(Opps!)

***

Host: Tell us more about your famous family.

Guest: Well, the senator is an alumni of UP.

(All by his lonesome?)

***

Host: Are you and your wife hoping that she will give birth to a boy this time?

Guest: Boy or girl, we will allow.

(Do tell!)

***

Host: Who's the best candidate in this talent search? Is it you?

Guest: Well, I have my opinion, but I don't want to raise my chair.

(—Overly literal translation of: *"Ayokong magbuhat ng sariling bangko!"*)

'Sine Taktakan'

THE CCP Film Division starts its series of forums for 2004 at 9 a.m. on Feb. 25 at the Little Theater with "Politics and Pinoy Media."

Other topics: March 17, "The Telenovela;" June 16, "Asian Cinema Rising"; July 21, "Need for Archival Awareness"; Aug. 18, "Sex and Violence: Pinoy Style?"; Sept. 15, "What's on the Pinoy Airwaves?"; Oct. 20, "Is Bad News Always the Best News?"; Nov. 17, "Noontime and Game Shows—Towards a Culture of Materialism"; Dec. 15, "Revising the Moribund Pinoy Film Industry." Call 832-1125, local 1704.

'Something's Gotta Give'

IN her new film, "Something's Gotta Give," **Diane Keaton** comes up with an award-winning performance as a mature woman torn between an old playboy (**Jack Nicholson**) and a young doctor (**Keanu Reeves**).

Keaton had a great time doing the movie, and it shows in her standout portrayal. She says she admires the story's university, and the fact that it transcends age and generations.

"Something's Gotta Give" is written and directed by **Nancy Meyers.**

DUNKIN' DONUTS
Pasalubong ng Bayan
presents
Ate Jhowie
FPJoey
"Bagay na bagay ngayong Valentine's."
★★★★★
Wheel of Love
Ang love game ng bayan
For ₱29, get a heart-shaped donut and 3 Love Kremes. Kasama pa ang love game where you can find your perfect match.
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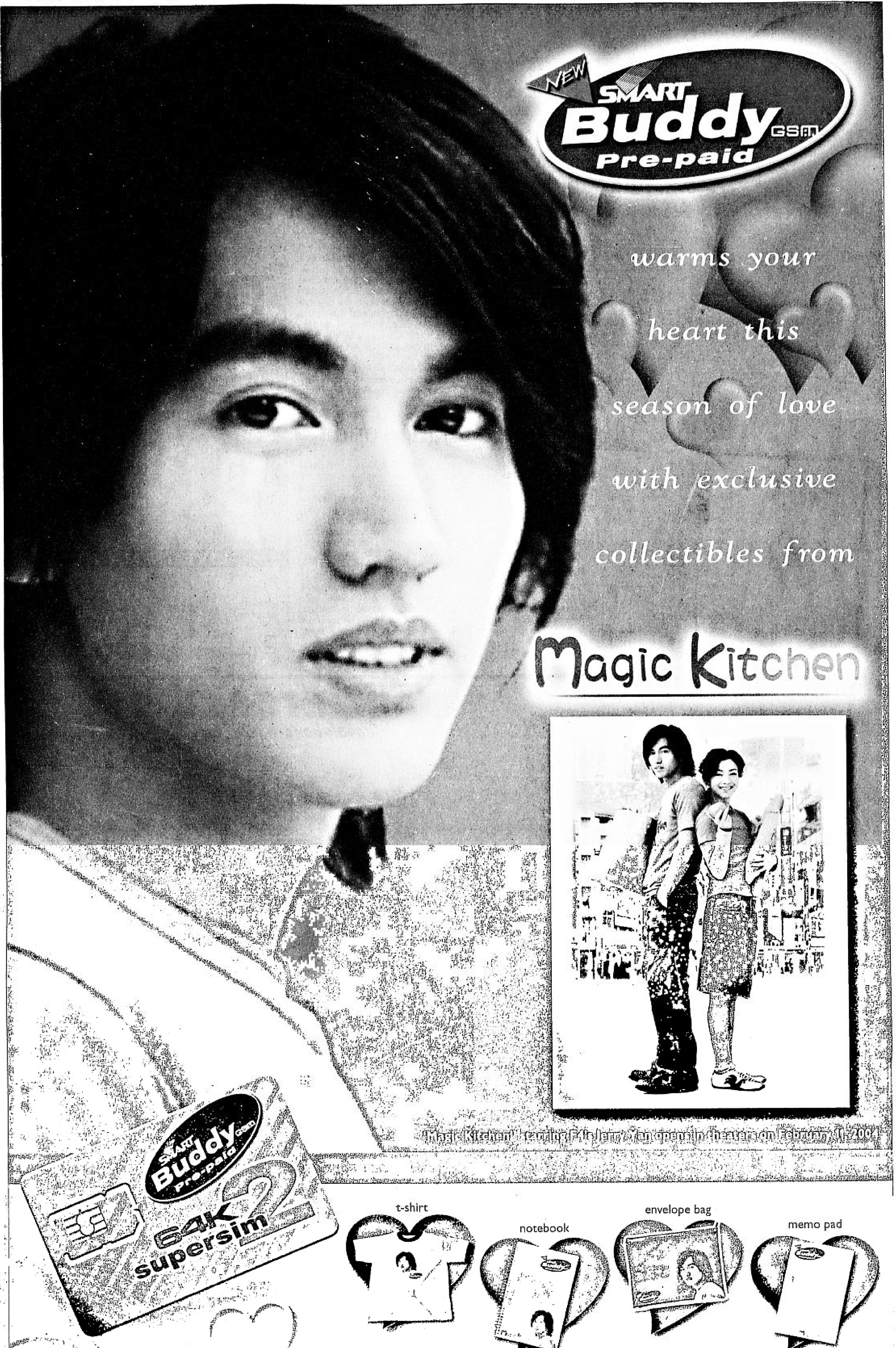
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Gov't intervention in stock mart urged

By Doris C. Dumlao

FORMER Philippine Stock Exchange president Ramon T. Garcia yesterday appealed for "intervention" from state-owned financial institutions to arrest the freefall of local stocks.

Garcia, who has gone back to the stock brokerage business, said in an interview that government financial institutions (GFIs)—pension funds Social Security System and Government Service Insurance System as well as lenders Development Bank of the Philippines and Land Bank of the Philippines—could help map out a strategy to reduce the country's vulnerability to fleeting foreign capital.

"We can follow the example of Malaysia. There was one time when foreign funds withdrew from Malaysia but local financial institutions got together to support the capital market," he said.

Although local financial institutions are much smaller than those in Malaysia, Garcia said they could band together along the same strategy.

"We should wake up to the realities. We are too dependent on foreign funds. I think something has to be done to avoid a repetition of what happened on Tuesday," Garcia said.

The main-share index fell by about 4 percent on Tuesday, the worst fall seen since July 2002.

In the same way that the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas intervenes whenever the peso is on a freefall, Garcia said there must also be a concerted effort to support the stock market.

Garcia noted that the GFIs, particularly SSS and GSIS, had shied away from the market after their funds were abused during the Estrada regime to prop up favored stocks.

"With the proper safeguards, they can make a significant contribution. However, buying and selling orders should be distributed to brokers evenly," Garcia said.

For its part, the SSS is redefining its thrust in the equity market.

SSS President Corazon dela Paz, in a recent PSE-Bloomberg forum, said the pension fund would do its part in mobilizing long-term capital and investing these in the local markets.

"SSS shall continue to participate in the exchange, the end being to secure into the future the financial protection that we have promised the many generations of SSS members," she said.

Dela Paz noted that under her term, she had deliberately avoided using the phrase "support the market" to completely disassociate the current SSS administration from anecdotal allegations that in the past, its funds were used to perk up the market and support favored stocks.

Meanwhile, the PSE yesterday welcomed the Senate's passage of a bill seeking to abolish the documentary stamp tax (DST) on secondary trade transactions and correct the tax distortions between equity and debt instruments.

President Macapagal-Arroyo is expected to sign the bill this month.

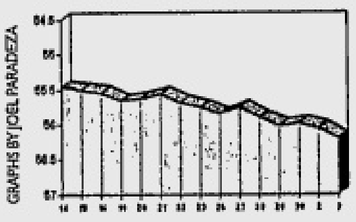
"The temporary abolition of DST in the purchase of securities at the secondary market, which the bill provides, is expected to boost liquidity in the market and strengthen its competitiveness with its peers in the region," the PSE said in a statement.

The highlights of the bill include:

GOV'T/B3

INDICATORS

CURRENCIES



JANUARY FEBRUARY

PESO-DOLLAR RATE

P 56.20 = $1
As of 5 p.m., Feb. 3, 2004

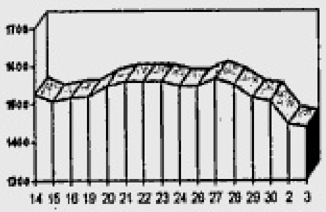
¥ 105.42 = $1
As of 5 p.m., Feb. 3, 2004

GOLD: $400.80-401.30
per ounce Hong Kong, Feb. 3, 2004

STOCK MARKET

PSE COMPOSITE INDEX

JANUARY FEBRUARY



(See stock market report on Page B2)

Stocks end down for 5th straight day

STOCKS dropped for the fifth straight session yesterday, led lower by number two firm Globe Telecom Inc., as concerns about political stability before the May 10 election continued to pummel the peso.

The main index fell 0.65 percent or 9.38 points to 1,437.67 points—its lowest close since Dec. 30, 2002—after it tumbled 4 percent on Monday.

The index, which leapt to its highest mark in nearly two years last month, has now lost 0.33 percent this year.

"The market's strong selling momentum on Monday continued," said AB Capital economic analyst Jose Vistan.

Turnover fell to P604.45 million from Monday's P817.55 million. Losers beat gainers 40 to 13 and there were 32 stocks unchanged.

Analysts said investors shrugged off news that the government barely met its 2003 budget deficit target of P202 billion, with the final figure coming in at P199.9 billion.

"That's old news," Vistan said. "There are political uncertainties and the peso's weakness is still affecting the market."

Concerns about military unrest helped plunge the peso to a record low of 56.22 to the dollar last week. Vistan said he expected the market to recover today after the index stayed above the psychological support at 1,430 points yesterday.

"We are expecting a technical rebound. But given the market's negative sentiments, recovery might be short-lived," he said. "The attitude is to sell on rally."

Globe Telecom, a unit of conglomerate Ayala Corp., fell 3.98 percent or P35 to P845.

Reuters

INTEREST RATES

February 03, 2004-MART1 Rates

Benchmark Interest Rates	MART1 3-Feb-04	MART1 2-Feb-04
1 Month	6.4654	6.475
3 Months	6.4607	6.4857
6 Months	7.7321	7.6257
1 Year	8.6446	8.485
2 Years	9.4589	9.4339
3 Years	10.3223	10.3133
4 Years	10.7161	10.7133
5 Years	11.0643	10.08
7 Years	11.4054	11.4
10 Years	11.6464	11.6464
20 Years	11.9911	11.9911
25 Years	12.3054	12.3107

SOURCE: MART/BLOOMBERG

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US firm offers to buy SPI Tech

By Doris C. Dumlao

NEW York-based private equity firm TH Lee Putnam Ventures has offered to buy 100 percent of leading IT service provider SPI Technologies for $87 million after the latter's talks with another foreign bidder collapsed.

In a disclosure to the Philippine Stock Exchange, SPI chief finance officer Francisco Suarez Jr. said the proposal may or may not lead to a tender offer for all of the company's share capital this March.

SPI signed on Monday a "nonbinding" and "conditional" letter of intent with TH Lee Putnam relating to the latter's possible acquisition of all or substantially all of SPI's outstanding shares.

TH Lee Putnam's indicative offer of $87 million for the entire share capital of SPI was higher than the $84 million offer earlier made by PPM Ventures Ltd., a unit of UK-based insurance giant Prudential Plc.

The new offer is equivalent to P15.60 a share, assuming the fully diluted share capital of 312.21 million shares, inclusive of shares to be issued upon the conversion of SPI's outstanding $10 million in convertible notes.

SPI shares closed at P12.50 at the local bourse yesterday, up from Monday's P12.25. Its share price has been rising over the last two days.

TH Lee Putnam was given an exclusive period to conduct the due-diligence audit and other activities required by the transaction.

The price quoted by TH Lee Putnam is net of selling expenses ordinarily for the account of selling shareholders. However, the stock transaction tax and transaction costs relating to the transfer of shares through the facilities of the PSE will be charged to the selling shareholders.

"Subject to the fulfillment of various conditions, a tender offer to acquire all of the issued and to be issued share capital of SPI will be made through a newly incorporated company to be established in the Philippine by TH Lee Putnam Ventures," Suarez said.

Telecom firms urged to focus on basic services

By Abigail L. Ho

IT WOULD be better to focus company resources on expanding basic telecommunications services than on rolling out more high-technology services like the third-generation (3G) wireless platform, a top telecom executive said.

Globe president and chief executive Gerardo Ablaza Jr. said the local wireless industry still has not fully explored all possible applications for its existing platforms.

The Ayala-led firm is currently offering general packet radio service (GPRS) applications, enhanced versions of the global system for mobile communications (GSM) platform that is dominant in the country.

Instead of just the basic voice calls and the popular text messaging, GPRS applications give users access to a wider range of services, including Internet connectivity and multimedia applications downloads.

While GPRS offerings have started to catch the fancy of many of the country's more than 22 million cellular subscribers, all of the platform's uses have yet to be explored.

Ablaza said this meant that now might not yet be the right time to start offering new services using a different wireless technology like 3G.

"I personally prefer 3G to come later than sooner. With the scarce resources we have, it is better to just have basic networks for the more basic communications needs of the Filipinos," he said.

He explained that Globe and its rival carriers have yet to fully address the communications needs of 100 percent of the country's population.

Services like basic telephony should still be a priority among carriers right now, although the introduction of new offerings would continue, he added.

Globe vice president for new products development Nicanor Santiago III earlier said that the European experience with 3G had a certain "sobering effect" on local operators, making them think whether or not it would be viable to get into the 3G market soon.

The availability of relevant services as well as viable billing schemes needed to be taken into consideration, he said.

"We're still into understanding the technology," he added.

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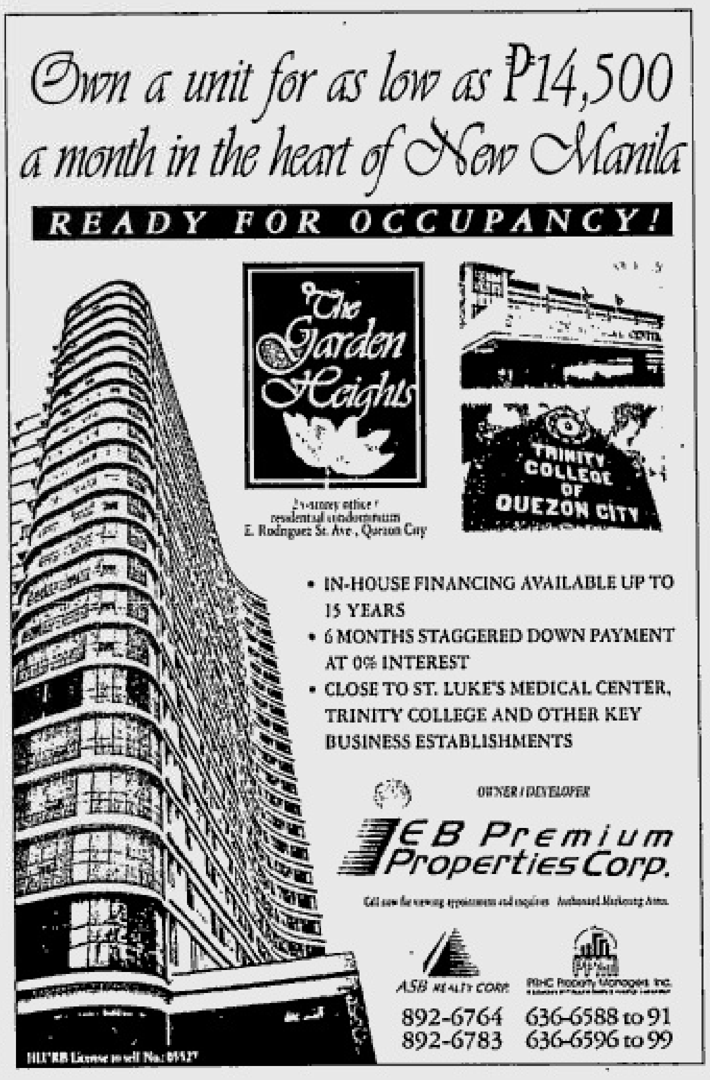
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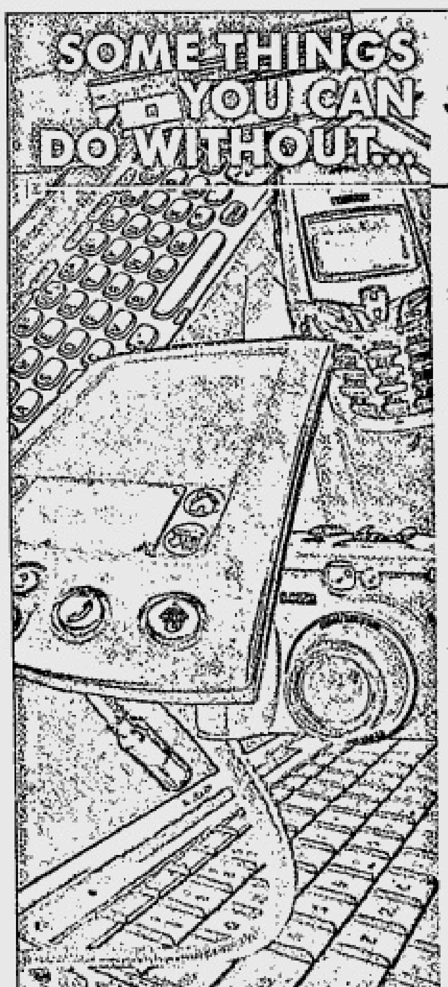
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Accounting for Non-Accountants II (Feb. 9 - 10)
Treasury Certification Program (Feb. 9 - 27)
Power Presentation Skills (Feb. 17 - 19)
Negotiation Skills Seminar (Feb. 19 - 20)
Service Quality Management (Feb: 19 - 20)
Total Quality Management (Feb. 21 & 28)
Management Skills for Field Sales Managers (Feb. 26 - 27)
March
Corporate Governance and Risk Management (Mar. 8 - 9)
Enhancing Distributors' Effectiveness Workshop (Mar. 8 - 9)
Analytical Problem Solving (Mar. 10 - 12)
Events Marketing (Mar. 15 - 16)
Fundamentals of Corporate Finance (Mar. 15 - 19)
Creative Approaches to Complaints Handling (Mar. 18 - 19)
Practical Project Management (Mar. 23 - 26)
Program and Project Performance Evaluation (Mar. 30 - Apr. 2)
April
Techniques of Financial Analysis (Apr. 12 - 16)
May
Effective Business Communication (May 25 - 28)
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PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

(As of February 3, 2004)

STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
BANKS & FINANCIAL SERVICES					
BANKS					
Banco de Oro Univ. Bank	17.25	17.25	17.25	17.25	2,700
Bank of the Phil. Islands	48	48.5	46	48.5	489,500
Citystate Savings Bank	16.25	16.25	16.25	16.25	2,500
Equitable PCI Bank Inc.	39.5	39.5	39.5	39.5	147,800
Export and Ind. Bank Inc.	0.51	0.51	0.5	0.51	250,000
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	26	26	25.5	26	567,200
Philippine National Bank	24	24	23.75	23.75	25,300
Rizal Comm. Banking Corp.	12.75	12.75	12.75	12.75	4,200
Union Bank of the Phil.	27	27	26.5	27	9,300
FINANCIAL SERVICES					
Filipino Fund Inc.	3.4	3.4	3.4	3.4	6,000
PCI Leasing & Fin. Inc.	1.32	1.32	1.32	1.32	200,000
Phil. Stock Exchange Inc.	190	190	190	190	1,000
Sun Life Financial Inc.	1490	1515	1490	1515	7,120
COMMERCIAL & INDUSTRIAL					
COMMUNICATION					
ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.	23.5	23.5	22.75	22.75	17,100
Digital Telecom Phils Inc.	0.71	0.71	0.69	0.7	2,150,000
Globe Telecom Inc.	875	875	840	845	31,870
Ipeople Inc.	1.18	1.18	1.14	1.14	46,000
Island Info and Tech Inc.	0.047	0.047	0.047	0.047	12,400,000
ISM Communications Corp.	0.04	0.04	0.04	0.04	600,000
Manila Bulletin Pub. Corp.	2.75	2.75	2.75	2.75	5,000
Pilipino Tel. Corp.	1.5	1.54	1.44	1.46	11,955,000
Phil. Telegraph & Tel. Co	0.17	0.17	0.17	0.17	10,000
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co.	815	830	810	825	212,980
Ivantage Corp.	0.35	0.35	0.35	0.35	50,000
Philweb Corp.	0.012	0.012	0.012	0.012	7,000,000
POWER & ENERGY					
Manila Electric Co. A	19.25	19.25	19	19	150,200
Manila Electric Co. B	31	31.5	30.5	31.5	651,300
Petron Corp.	2.8	2.8	2.7	2.75	2,634,000
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
Int'l Container Term'l Sv	3.2	3.2	3.2	3.2	405,000
Keppel Phils. Marine Inc.	0.27	0.27	0.27	0.27	370,000
CONSTRUCTION & OTHER RELATED PRODUCTS					
Engineering Equip. Inc.	0.31	0.31	0.3	0.3	470,000
Union Cement Corp.	1.04	1.06	1.04	1.06?	1,182,000
FOOD, BEVERAGES & TOBACCO					
Jollibee Foods Corp.	19	19	18.5	18.75	180,600
Swift Food Inc.	0.3	0.3	0.27	0.27	30,000
San Miguel Corp. A	56	56.5	56	56.5	65,300
San Miguel Corp. B	69.5	69.5	68.5	69	378,800
Universal Robina Corp.	5.8	5.8	5.8	5.8	1,000
Vitarich Corp.	0.26	0.26	0.26	0.26	450,000
HOLDING FIRMS					
Abacus Con Res & Hdg A	0.34	0.34	0.33	0.33	160,000
Ayala Corp.	5.7	5.7	5.6	5.6	7,959,000
Aboitiz Equity Ventures	3.1	3.2	3.1	3.1	90,000
A. Soriano Corp.	0.88	0.88	0.85	0.85	20,000
APC Group Inc.	0.08	0.08	0.08	0.08	500,000
Alcorn Gold Res. Corp.	0.0055	0.0055	0.0055	0.0055	10,000,000
ATN Holdings Inc.	1.6	1.6	1.6	1.6	70,000
Bacnotan Cons Indus Inc.	8.9	9.7	8.9	9.7	2,000
Benpres Holdings Corp.	0.65	0.65	0.6	0.61	110,560,000
Basic Consolidated Inc.	0.09	0.09	0.09	0.09	100,000
Crown Equities Inc.	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	60,000
DMCI Holdings Inc.	0.24	0.24	0.23	0.23	640,000
Filinvest Dev. Corp.	1.02	1.02	1	1	10,000
First Phil Hldgs Corp.	22.75	22.75	22	22.25	700,800
Ionics Inc.	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	10,000
J.G. Summit Holdings Inc.	1.9	1.9	1.88	1.88	242,000
Keppel Holdings B	0.72	0.72	0.72	0.72	10,000
Megaworld Corp.	1.14	1.14	1.08	1.08	4,388,000
Metro Pacific Corp.	0.3	0.3	0.29	0.29	10,930,000
Prime Orion Phils. Inc.	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	50,000
Prime Media Holdings Inc.	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	2,000
Solid Group Inc.	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	400,000
SPI Technologies Inc.	12.5	12.5	12.5	12.5	45,000
Waterfront Phils. Inc.	0.26	0.26	0.26	0.26	100,000
MANUFACTURING, DISTRIBUTION & TRADING					
Euro-Med Lab. Phil. Inc.	3	3	3	3	10,000
Matsushita Elec Phil Corp.	7.5	7.5	7.5	7.5	2,000
Mabuhay Vinyl Corp.	1.26	1.26	1.26	1.26	18,000
Pryce Corp.	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	500,000
HOTEL, RECREATION & OTHER SERVICES					
Belle Corp.	0.48	0.48	0.48	0.48	40,000
Leisure & Resorts Corp.	0.27	0.27	0.26	0.26	320,000
Mondragon Intl Phils Inc.	0.15	0.15	0.15	0.15	200,000
BONDS, PREFERRED & WARRANTS					
ABS-CBN Hldgs. Corp. (Pdr)	23.5	23.5	22.5	22.5	557,400
PROPERTY					
Ayala Land Inc.	5.9	6.1	5.9	6.1	2,265,000
Cityland Development Corp.	1.8	1.8	1.8	1.8	1,000
Cebu Holdings Inc.	0.33	0.33	0.33	0.33	10,000
Cyber Bay Corp.	0.13	0.13	0.13	0.13	1,580,000
Empire East Land Inc.	0.23	0.23	0.225	0.23	2,600,000
Filinvest Land Inc.	1.06	1.08	1.06	1.08	5,393,000
Keppel Phils. Prop. Inc.	0.75	0.75	0.7	0.7	200,000
City & Land Developers	1.7	1.7	1.7	1.7	20,000
Robinsons Land Corp.	2.12	2.12	2.1	2.1	20,000
SM Development Corp.	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	100,000
SM Prime Holdings Inc.	6	6	5.9	5.9	14,364,000
MINING					
Lepanto Cons Mng. Co. A	0.215	0.215	0.215	0.215	590,000
Lepanto Cons. Mng. Co B	0.27	0.27	0.27	0.27	1,940,000
Manila Mining Corp. B	0.007	0.007	0.007	0.007	5,000,000
Philex Mining Corp. B	0.43	0.43	0.42	0.42	520,000

	SHARES	VALUE(P)
Bank & Fin Svc	1,712,620	56,247,325.00
Comm'l & Ind'l	190,142,350	440,933,785.00
PRO	26,553,000	106,149,250.00
Mining	8,050,000	907,050.00
GRAND TOTALS :	226,457,970	604,237,410.00

AVERAGES		
Bank & Fin Svc	452.88	DOWN 1.06
Comm'l & Ind'l	2,176.50	DOWN 18.06
PRO	552.43	DOWN 0.97
Mining	1,537.20	UP 12.63
OIL	1.30	UNCH 0.00
SME	100.00	UNCH 0.00
All Shares Index	927.67	UP 5.27
Composite	1,437.67	DOWN 9.38

NO. OF ADVANCES: 13; NO. OF DECLINES: 40; NO. OF UNCHANGED: 32; NO. OF TRADED ISSUES: 85; NO. OF TRADES: 2,230

DISCLOSURES

PCI Leasing and Finance Inc. bought a total of 695,000 of its own shares at P1.32 each.

* * *

LMG Chemicals Corp. moved it s annual stockholders' meeting from Feb. 13 to Feb. 19, 4 p.m. at the 7/F of Chemphil Building, Makati City.

* * *

CHEMICAL Industries of the Philippines Inc. moved its annual stockholders' meeting from Feb. 12 to Feb. 19, 10 a.m. at the 7/F of Chemphil Building, Makati City.

* * *

JULIO Jalandoni was elected additional member of **Philcomsat Holdings Corp.**'s executive committee.

* * *

CHINATRUST (Philippines) Commercial Bank Corp. will dissolve its affiliate, Chinatrust Forex Corp., of which the bank has 40-percent equity stake.

* * *

SPI Technologies Inc. and its major shareholders, including A.Soriano Corp., signed a non-binding and conditional letter of intent with TH Lee Putman Ventures for the possible acquisition by THLPV of all or substantially all of SPI's outstanding shares for $87 million or about P15.60 per share.

* * *

RECORD date for **Philippine Stock Exchange Inc.**'s March 13 annual stockholders' meeting is on Feb. 20. ***Compiled by Maricar D. Tolosa, PDI Research***

CURRENCIES

February 3, 2004 Country	Unit	Euro Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	0.804570	1.000000	55.931000
Japan	Yen	0.007621	0.009472	0.529800
United Kingdom	Pound	1.464076	1.819700	101.777600
Hongkong	Dollar	0.103475	0.128609	7.193200
Switzerland	Franc	0.637839	0.792770	44.340400
Canada	Dollar	0.601818	0.747999	41.836300
Singapore	Dollar	0.474868	0.590214	33.011300
Australia	Dollar	0.608324	0.756086	42.288600
Bahrain	Dinar*	2.134194	2.652590	148.362000
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.214547	0.266660	14.914600
Brunei	Dollar	0.473472	0.588478	32.914200
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000095	0.000118	0.006600
Thailand	Baht	0.020525	0.025510	1.426800
UAE	Dirham	0.219055	0.272264	15.228000
Euro	Euro	1.000000	1.242900	69.516600
Argentina	Peso	0.274363	0.341006	19.072800
Brazil	Real	0.273663	0.340136	19.024100
Denmark	Kroner	0.134216	0.166817	9.330200
India	Rupee	0.017800	0.022124	1.237400
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.211757	0.263193	14.720600
Mexico	New Peso	0.073069	0.090818	5.079500
New Zealand	Dollar	0.540270	0.671501	37.557700
Norway	Kroner	0.115159	0.143131	8.005500
Pakistan	Rupee	0.014090	0.017513	0.979500
South Africa	Rand	0.114530	0.142349	7.961700
Korea	Won	0.000688	0.000855	0.047800
Sweden	Kroner	0.108930	0.135389	7.572400
Syria	Pound	0.015622	0.019417	1.086000
Taiwan	Nt Dollar	0.024234	0.030120	1.684600
Venezuela	Bolivar	0.000504	0.000627	0.035100

Smart move on Piltel

COCKTALES

Victor C. Agustin

IF the red-hot Piltel rally has lately been sputtering, it is because the word is out that the hoped-for merger with its money-spinning sister, Smart, would no longer push through. Not this year anyway.

Two Piltel directors Cocktales spoke to were even more blunt: The hyped merger was not even discussed by the Piltel board at all.

According to the grapevine, the planned backdoor listing of Smart through Pilipino Telephone Corp. is riddled with legal and financial minefields, given the rehabilitation covenants that Piltel had committed itself to the bank consortium to enable it to restructure more than P41 billion in debts.

One option now being floated: Backdoor-list Smart through PLDT itself.

Iraqi dividend

THE local construction industry is finally getting the hoped-for Iraqi reconstruction dividends.

Without fanfare, 15 engineers left this weekend for Iraq, recruited by Asiakonstruct in behalf of its American principal, defense contractor Raytheon.

More engineers and construction-related personnel should be joining shortly.

According to the grapevine, Asiakonstruct is also being considered for the massive reconstruction efforts for the earthquake-devastated Iranian city of Bam, mainly because of its having successfully completed a civil project in northern Iran in the early '90s.

Unfortunately, Asiakonstruct was smeared in the Ramos-era Expo Centennial project, although the firm was eventually cleared of the criminal charges, prompting its president, Edgardo Angeles Sr., to assume an even lower profile despite its foreign successes.

Lie-flat seats now here

VIPs who missed the SkyBeds of the pre-privatization Philippine Airlines should now have a reason to enjoy, or at least better endure, long-haul flying again.

Sensing the void that PAL has left, Northwest Airlines has quietly started introducing lie-flat business class seats with privacy canopies on certain flights to and from Manila.

Those seats currently constitute the first-class section of Asiana Airlines, the Korean carrier that recently started promoting a thrice-weekly Seoul-Clark run in addition to its daily Manila flights.

Northwest says it now has fitted the lie-flat seats on about 20 percent of its Boeing 747-400 fleet. By yearend, all 747-400s serving the transpacific routes, including those terminating in Manila, should feature such mile-high comforts.

Heard through the grapevine

ALCOA, whose Philippine subsidiary makes plastic caps for Coke and Pepsi, is considering closing its Laguna plant and moving to China where it is being offered a rent-free factory.

Alcoa's lease for a 5,000-square-meter facility within Carmelray Industrial Park expires this year.

(Email: cocktales_pdi@yahoo.com or cocktales_pdi@hotmail.com.)

Panasonic allots ₱500M to expand RP phone plant

By Abigail L. Ho

PANASONIC Mobile Communications Corp. of the Philippines (PMCP) is investing P500 million this year to increase the capacity of its cellular phone manufacturing plant in Sta. Rosa, Laguna.

In a news briefing yesterday, PMCP president Reynaldo Lico said the new infusion would be used to augment the plant's capacity to be able to better meet the global demand for mobile phones.

Panasonic's handset manufacturing plant in the Philippines produces mobile phones not just for the local market but also for the whole of Asia (except China and Japan), Oceania, Middle East and the Americas.

Lico said the plant produces about 500,000 handsets a month, 98 percent of which are shipped out of the country.

Around 80 percent of the PMCP plant's total production volume go to the Asian markets while 18 percent are shipped to the Americas, he said.

With the new P500-million investment, he said the company was projecting a 40-percent growth in handset sales for fiscal year 2004, which would start in April.

"The objective is to expand more in the Asian markets. We will be expanding our operations by about three times within the next three years," he said.

Lico saw global market demand for mobile phones reaching 420 million to 450 million this year.

In terms of Philippine market share, Panasonic GSM Phones Inc. managing director Rafael Limcaoco said the company hoped to corner about 6 to 10 percent of the mobile phone market.

To do this, he said the company would be tapping more dealer-partners nationwide to sell Panasonic handsets.

"The battle is on. The sleeping giant has now woken up," he said.

The company currently has a 2- to 3-percent share of the local mobile handset market.

This year, Panasonic will be introducing 12 new cellular phone models in the market. It will remain a niche player, as it has been over the years, although it will also be offering phones that cater to almost all income brackets.

Panasonic Philippines director Hiroshi Otani said Panasonic's target market included "unique" individuals, indicative of the company's niche strategy.

"Our handsets are not for everybody. Our models are quite unique," he said.

Gov't intervention . . .

From page B1

- DST rate on the original issuance of shares of stock with or without par value was reduced to P1 on each P200 or fractional part thereof from the current P2;
- DST rate on sales, agreements to sell, memoranda of sales, deliveries or transfer of shares or certificates of stock was reduced to P0.75 on each P200 or fractional part thereof from the current P1.50, and
- DST rate for the original issuance of debt instruments was increased to P1 on each P200 or fractional part thereof from the current P0.30.

The following instruments and documents are no longer subject to DST:

- Borrowing and lending of securities executed under the securities borrowing and lending program of a registered exchange, or in accordance with regulations prescribed by the regulatory authority;
- Sale, barter or exchange of shares of stock listed and traded through the local stock exchange for a period of five years;
- Fixed income and other securities traded in the secondary market or through an exchange, and
- Derivatives, or financial instruments whose values are derived from an underlying index.

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Budget deficit, low tax revenue top '04 concerns

By Roberto F. de Ocampo
President, Asian Institute of Management

COMMENTARY

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Some in media have even insinuated that I was being critical of the present economic management, even as I carefully tried to keep the discussions at the analytical level, as befits one who is now in the academic world.

My concerns have centered on the following unfortunate trends in what I consider key indicators of the country's economic health:

Worsening fiscal position

The government saw a worsening of its fiscal position starting 1998 and reaching a deficit of P212.7 billion by the end of 2002, at which level it constituted 5.3 percent of gross domestic product.

It may be mentioned, however, that an improvement in 2003 was seen, with the fiscal deficit as a percent of deficit declining to 3.9 percent in the eight-month period to August 2003. Latest 11-month data indicated some improvement with the deficit leveling at P172.2 billion, lower than the P189.7 billion ceiling, and behind the programmed limit for the year (P202 billion).

While the government has stated that it intends to keep its 2003 shortfall within 4.7 percent, my concern is that notwithstanding this improvement relative to 2002 due to higher tax collections, the current budget deficit remains high relative to earlier years.

Poor tax revenue

The first line of defense to deal with the burgeoning deficit is to improve tax collection efforts.

The tax revenue effort ratio has deteriorated from 14.43 percent in 2000 to 13.22 percent in 2002. Fortunately, the BIR has Parayno who was Customs commissioner in my time, and as of the first semester of 2003, the tax effort ratio has been brought back to 14 percent.

Nonetheless, I would say that tax effort has to improve mightily in view of the gargantuan debt that clings like an albatross on the economy.

Rising debt

Total external debt as of the end of September 2003 stood at $56.35 billion, a 5.1-percent increase from 2002 levels.

A third of government expenditure now goes towards servicing the government's public debt stock, which as of September, stood at P3.8 trillion or 90 percent of GDP.

Exacerbating this is the fact that nearly 60 percent of public debt is denominated in foreign currencies.

Let's take a quick look at total outstanding debt of the national government as a percentage of GDP.

In 1997-1998, it constituted just about 56 percent of GDP, rising to 65 percent in 2000-2001, and to 70 percent in 2002. By June 2003 this had risen to 71 percent!

A cross country comparison on government debt levels shows that Philippine government debt is high compared with debt levels of other countries.

Even comparing government debt as a percentage of revenue, the Philippines is highest at about 500 percent, in contrast to Thailand which is about 150 percent.

This would really make the country vulnerable to event risk (that is, the inability to tap international capital markets when needed).

Deteriorating exchange rate

At P55.65 to the US dollar as of Jan. 19 this year, the Philippine peso shows every sign of continuing its decline.

This rate is at its lowest since 1998. Compared to Thailand, the peso has fared poorly, declining from P41.37 in 1998. The Thai baht, on the other hand, has recovered from a similar Thai baht to US dollar rate of 40.89 in 1998 to 39.01 as of Jan. 19, 2004, nearly back to its level when the Asian financial crisis hit.

The peso deterioration is seen to be caused by the combination of two factors: the deficit and higher political risk assessment even as the dollar weakens.

Flat level of exports

Registered export earnings for November 2003 were down by 4.9 percent to $2.9 billion from $3.1 billion during the same month in 2002.

This was mainly due to the decline in revenue from electronic products which account for over 68 percent of aggregate export revenue.

The decline in exports resulted in a widening of the trade deficit to $1.617 billion during the 10-month period January to October 2003 from $425 million in the same period in 2002.

For October 2003 alone, the trade gap was at $68.8 million. And then again, with the possibility of the US economy recovering, this gap may be mitigated.

Low level of foreign investments

Despite the fact that the combined foreign direct investments of BOI, Peza, CDC and SBMA rose by 38 percent during the third quarter of 2003 compared to pledges committed in the same quarter in 2002, total approved FDIs for the first nine months of 2003 actually declined by close to P20 billion, or 45 percent from its previous year's level.

Net direct investments in that period dropped by 93 percent to $68 million, while net portfolio investments also careened down by 98 percent to $22 million.

The Philippines' net FDIs as a percent of GDP at 1.7 percent was one of the lowest in East and Southeast Asia, only bettering Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, India and Indonesia.

Latest data from the ADB show that Vietnam has actually attracted $38.4 billion in FDI (compared to Philippines with $170 million), or just over 4 percent of its GDP.

Parallel concerns

Interestingly enough, the concerns that I have expressed are pretty close to what Secretary Camacho expressed after he left the Department of Finance.

His main areas of reform included:

Fiscal reforms

He expressed serious concern about the need to avert a fiscal crisis, because of the huge deficit that is eating up the yearly budget, and which could lead to a problem of confidence.

Reforms in the energy area

He expressed concern over a looming power shortage, and ironically, the need for power rates to be market oriented.

Banking sector, capital markets

Reforms in the area of banking and finance are what I had also been pushing for when I was at the helm of the finance department, proposing what was then called the Manila Initiative.

It was intended to swiftly undertake initiatives to facilitate increased participation in infrastructure, promote the development of financial capital markets and support the freer flow of capital.

Governance

Other than concerns about corruption and bureaucratic red tape, the recent former finance secretary expressed concern about the importance of consistency of the regulatory environment and government policies as one area of reform that those in the business sector would like to see, and definitely has been one that has impeded or discouraged many of our potential investors.

Political reforms

He also expressed concern about the inability of our political system to respond to the challenge of emergencies, to new threats and obstacles and to arrive at solutions.

Clearly these concerns or areas of reform would have to be faced by whoever sits at the finance post.

Acting Secretary Amatong, who had built a career in finance, would need to convince nervous investors that she is serious about reining in the deficit in 2004.

I do feel that investors are concerned that expenditure will exceed budgeted levels in the run-up to the May elections.

Peering into the future

Speaking of 2004, this in a nutshell, is what I see over the next 12 months:

- The first half, which we are currently mired in, is going to be devoted to politics. In the run-up to the elections, I do not expect to see any new initiatives or any new pieces of economic legislation.
- The second half is likely to be devoted to watching how the elected administration will behave—that is, who will be appointed to key positions in government and the articulation of the program, whether there is going to be an overall game plan.
- In other words, 2004 will be 12 months of wait and see, and in all likelihood, will be unremarkable in terms of economic initiatives or management. But definitely, the year will be compellingly interesting with respect to politics.

Challenges ahead

In conclusion, the challenges ahead, while not necessarily insurmountable, are definitely difficult.

Responses to these challenges cannot be delayed, since the world is getting more, not less, competitive.

Certainly, the challenge of China requires more focused effort to identify the country's niche in the overall regional economic configuration.

Even more surely, our competitor economies are not going to sit around waiting for us even as we recharge our economy.

Presently, our economy stands on two main pillars:

1. Remittances. The magnitude and importance of remittances to the Philippines can be seen in the fact that remittances as a percent of GDP was at 8 percent in 2002.

The immense contribution of OFW remittances to the national economy can be seen from the ratio of OFW remittances as a percent of FDI, which in 2002 was 285 percent.

2. Fortuitous weather. The better-than-expected third quarter growth in 2003, as well as growth in the recent past, have mainly been the result of fortuitous weather in the last two to three years.

Indeed, our growth, despite our penchant for simply muddling through, has to a great extent been fueled by consumption due to overseas remittances and agriculture.

Any administration that gets elected will have to prioritize the following in the IMMEDIATE term:

- Revenue efficiency to tame the fiscal deficit;
- Peace and order to assure business and to restore optimism;
- Preparation for global competition through the promotion of growth zones and trimming the bureaucracy;
- Infrastructure with the private sector at the forefront, and
- Consistency of policy to invite the trust of investors, both foreign and local.

All of these initiatives have to be achieved within the framework of a governance philosophy that positions the government's role as an ENABLER rather than as a PROVIDER.

This was the philosophy that was found most effective during the Ramos administration.

Unfortunately, what has happened in the succeeding government was a recall of the old fiefdom or centrist style of governance.

This has led to an unhealthy, immature dependence on central government. Worse, it has also resulted in leaving out or forgetting areas which are farther away from the center, such as Mindanao.

I cannot tire of repeating the need to return to this governance framework, because government as the giver of all bounty is a ticking time bomb.

Eventually, with poor revenue, mounting expenditures, and ballooning debt, the government will implode.

Final word

As someone who has been in government, all I have wished for is the continuance of a growth process of which our nation is surely capable of.

Indeed, with its fits and starts, this only proves that if we put our mind to it, we are capable of soaring as well as our neighbors.

What we need to concentrate on is to have a national vision that gives every Filipino a star to latch on to.

Such a vision must ensure the national interest, and not the fleeting power and glory of a few years in office.

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Budget deficit, low tax revenue top '04 concerns

By Roberto F. de Ocampo
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Final word

As someone who has been in government, all I have wished for is the continuance of a growth process of which our nation is surely capable of.

Indeed, with its fits and starts, this only proves that if we put our mind to it, we are capable of soaring as well as our neighbors.

What we need to concentrate on is to have a national vision that gives every Filipino a star to latch on to.

Such a vision must ensure the national interest, and not the fleeting power and glory of a few years in office.

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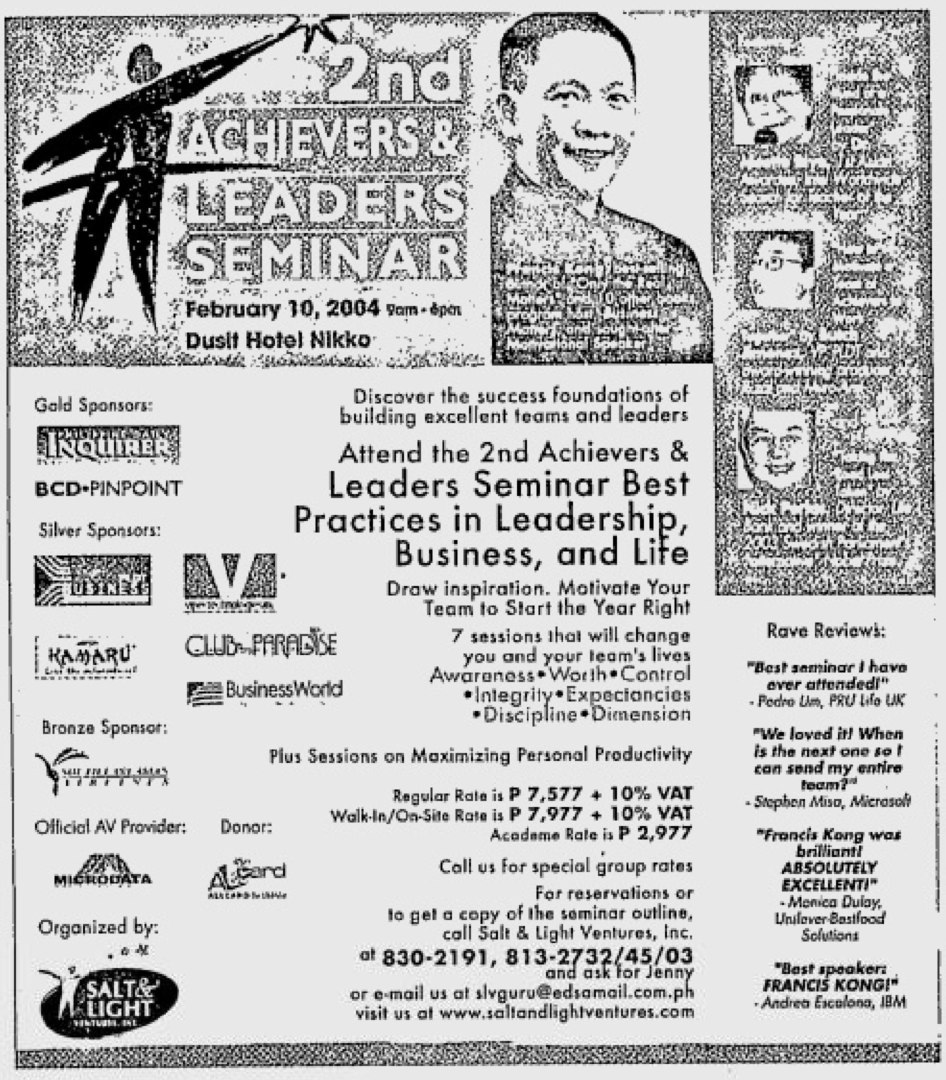

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Naia-3 to open in July as scheduled, says DOTC

By Abigail L. Ho

THE GOVERNMENT is confident that the controversial Ninoy Aquino International Airport Terminal 3 (Naia-3) can start operations in July, despite legal issues that remain unresolved.

Transportation Secretary Leandro Mendoza said in an interview that, as far as technical matters were concerned, the new airport should be ready for operations within the next few months.

"That's very feasible, but only when we clear all the legal issues. There are actually some legal concerns, particularly with the order of the Supreme Court, which states that there has to be just compensation (before the government can take over the terminal)," he told reporters.

He added that the Manila International Airport Authority was ready to take over the state-of-the-art facility once the legal obstacles had been cleared.

The Supreme Court on May 5, 2003 nullified the Philippine International Air Terminals Co. Inc.'s contract with the government for the construction of the Naia-3, citing "onerous provisions" in the agreement as the reason.

The court likewise "denied with finality" Piatco's motion for reconsideration on the case.

But the airport consortium is currently preparing its second motion for reconsideration, saying that the government cannot just take over the terminal without giving Piatco "just compensation" for building the facility in the first place.

The amount of compensation has yet to be determined, however, as Piatco is not accepting the government's estimate of only $350 million.

Piatco vice president for public affairs Moises Tolentino Jr. said in an earlier interview that the consortium would not accept anything lower than $550 million as compensation.

But Mendoza said an independent auditor should be the one to assess the new terminal to determine what it was really worth.

He said Piatco, during informal talks, had agreed to get a third-party auditor, but the question of who would shoulder the expenses for the auditor's fees remained unanswered.

"The problem is who will pay the auditor. On the part of the government, we're willing to shoulder half of the expenses and Piatco can shoulder the other half. But that's still just an idea, nothing concrete," he said.

A three-person government panel was also formed last year to determine how the government can take over the facility, including how much compensation Piatco should get.

But Mendoza is the only one left in the three-member panel as other members—Trade Secretary Manuel Roxas II and Tourism Secretary Richard Gordon—had both resigned from their Cabinet posts to run for Senate seats in the coming May polls.

Right now, he said the Office of the Government Corporate Counsel and the Office of the Solicitor General were doing the legwork for the government with regard to Naia-3 issues.

Banks' 2003 profits higher than expected

By Doris C. Dumlao

AFTER a lackluster performance in 2002, Philippine banks saw a significant recovery in net profits last year on the back of higher interest earnings and treasury gains.

In terms of earnings growth, the best performers among publicly listed banks so far were Banco de Oro Universal Bank of taipan Henry Sy and the Aboitiz group's Union Bank of the Philippines, which posted 43 percent and 40 percent increases in net profits in 2003, respectively.

The country's biggest bank in terms of resources—Metropolitan Bank and Trust Co.—also reported a full-year net profit of P3.02 billion or about 20 percent better than the P2.51 billion posted a year ago. Its subsidiary, Philippine Savings Bank, reported a 33.6-percent growth in net profit to P403.6 million from a year ago.

Second biggest lender Bank of the Philippine Islands reported a 10-percent expansion in earnings to P5.7 billion, the highest level in the industry.

Medium-sized lenders Security Bank Corp. and Chinatrust (Philippines) Commercial Bank Corp. likewise recorded growth in 2003 net profit of 24 percent and 22 percent, respectively.

Equitable PCI Bank estimated that its earnings last year surged by at least 20 percent, or better than earlier expectation of 10 percent.

"This is a combination of factors—one is the recovery from the previous year's poor performance. Also, most banks made a lot of money from non-lending activities—treasury functions and the rising interest rates and volatile exchange range helped them," said Unicapital Securities research head Eric Claudio.

However, Claudio said most of the lending growth last year was gobbled up by the public rather than the private sector.

This year, the banks are seen to benefit from higher margins arising from interest rate increases.

"But the thing is, the banks might sacrifice potential income from lending. Lending growth is not yet recovering in a big way," Claudio said.

For its part, Metrobank's interest income in 2003 stood at P22.88 billion against interest expense of P13.79 billion while provisions for probable losses amounted to P2.6 billion. Other income amounted to P11.1 billion as against other expenses of P14.57 billion.

BDO, which is bidding for a controlling stake in Equitable PCI, said its net interest income surged by 55 percent to P3.5 billion but other income dropped by 3 percent to P2.38 billion. In 2002, BDO booked one-time gains from the sale of secondary shares during its initial public offering in May that year.

UnionBank benefited from capital and treasury-related businesses, private banking, cash management services, and consumer banking.

PTAA to hold 3-day travel trade exposition

THE PHILIPPINE Travel Agencies Association will hold on Feb. 6 to 8 the 11th TravelTour Expo, an annual travel trade show, at the Megatrade Halls of SM Megamall Building B, Mandaluyong City.

With the uptick in leisure trekking and constant requirements for business travel, the event organizers and over 100 participating companies are confident that on-site sales will be close to the P100-million mark. Last year's TravelTour Expo posted P84 million in actual sales.

With the theme, "The World of Travel Possibilities—Riding the Waves, Touring the Roads & Flying the Skies," TravelTour Expo will offer a wide array of reliable travel resources, and countless options and privileges for the traveling set.

Participation by exhibitors and buyers has been on the rise since the show was launched in 1994.

Over 60,000 people attended the 10th TravelTour Expo.The expo has always been well-attended by representatives from both the private and government sectors.

This year's event is co-presented by the Department of Tourism, with Equitable Card and Philippine Airlines as official credit card and official carrier, respectively. Also lending their support are SuperFerry and Globe Handyphone. TravelTour Expo serves as a venue for industry players to establish a market presence, network and showcase new products and services.

For inquiries about TravelTour Expo 2004, kindly call up PTAA at 552-0026 to 29 or email traveltourexpo@fastmail.i-next.net.

LAST CALL FOR LAWYERS WHO HAVE NOT YET UNDERGONE THE PRESCRIBED MCLE SEMINAR

COMPREHENSIVE MCLE COURSE OF THE
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CLUB FILIPINO, SAN JUAN, METRO MANILA

SUBJECTS/TOPICS:

Judicial and Bar Reforms (**3 hrs/units**); Computer Technology in the Implementation of the E-Commerce Law & the Application of the Electronic Evidence Rule (**3 hrs/units**); Legal Analysis/Case Briefing of Recent Landmark Supreme Court Decisions (**4 hrs/units**); Legal Analysis/Case Briefing of Landmark SC Decisions Affecting Labor Management Relations (**1 hr/unit**); The Anti-Money Laundering Law: Problems and Solutions (**2 hrs/units**); A Critical Review of the Securities Regulation Code (**2 hrs/units**); Review of Leading U.S. and Philippine Cases Involving Legal and Judicial Ethics (**6 hrs/units**); Comparative Pretrial and Trial Skills (**4 hrs/units**); Case Briefing and Pleadings Writing (**4 hrs/units**); Alternative Dispute Resolutions: Trends and Developments (**5 hrs/units**); Enforceability in the Philippines of International Agreements on Intellectual Property Disputes (**2 hrs/units**). **Total No. of Hrs/Units: 36**

LECTURERS/DISCUSSANTS:

SC Associate Justice (Ret.) Jose C. Melo; Atty. Jaime N. Soriano, Cyber Law Practitioner, IT Executive and Remedial Law Professor; Atty. Eliseo P. Ocampo, Executive Chairman, Institute of Continuing Legal Studies & Education (ICLSE), Paralegal Director, Arellano University, and Law Practitioner and Professor; Atty. Norman C. Nuñez, Law Professor, Lecturer and Practitioner; Atty. Manuel B. Curato, Executive Legal Adviser, Equitable-PCIBank, Banking Law Lecturer and Commercial Law Professor; Atty. Editha A. Santos, Advocacy/Law Lecturer & Sr.Partner-Litigator (Ocampo Arciaga-Santos Nuñez Lomangaya & Ribao Law Offices); Atty. Rolando A. Niedo, Law Professor and Practitioner.

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It would be a pity if you didn't look at the Lange 1 movement with a magnifying glass.

But you certainly don't need one to read its patented outsize date.

The Lange 1's balance-cock.
Lange's inimitable watchmaking skill in magnification: free-hand cutting by a master engraver makes every balance-cock unmistakably unique, and the patented whiplash precision index adjuster combines the aesthetic beauty of superb craftsmanship with Lange's watchmaking ingenuity. The result is technical and artistic perfection of a degree which can only be found in Lange watches.
The balance-cock full size:

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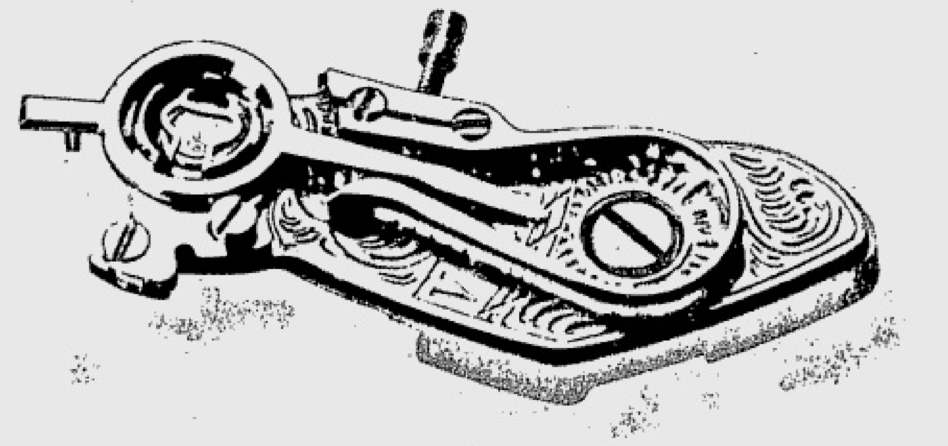
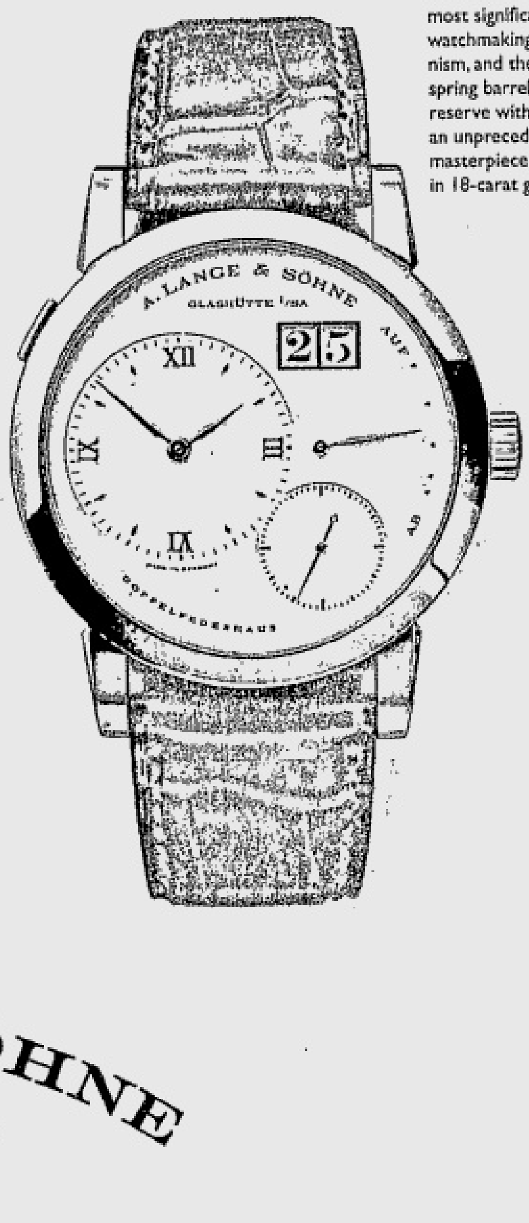
One of mechanical watchmaking's most strikingly useful inventions allows for a date display three times the size of those on conventional wristwatches. The patented double-disc mechanism with over 40 individual components may be the most significant contemporary watchmaking innovation. This mechanism, and the distinctive twin mainspring barrels for three day's power reserve with indicator, makes for an unprecedented watchmaking masterpiece. The Lange 1 is available in 18-carat gold or in platinum.





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FEBRUARY 2004 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

GP YOUTH KAPIHAN

8am to 11am, Saturday, **February 7, 2004**
at Chowking Pioneer, Mandaluyong

GPM believes that today's 18-25 year olds will be the driving force that will enable transformation into a Galing Pilipino generation.

This Saturday's topic: "GALING KABATAAN" ***will feature Galing Pilipino youths who have voluntarily initiated social development projects such as a Community Water System in a squatter relocation site, Pilipino sports development like Arnis, Youth training Youths to handle special children in a summer camp. Be inspired by "Galing" students who use what they learn in school to help others in need. It's cool to 'Be GALING'.***

FREE BRUNCH! Hosted by Chowking

GALING LOVING ON VALENTINE'S DAY

With a full day program of 'Galing' activities

Saturday, **February 14, 2004**
8am to 5pm at SOS Children's Villages
Mindanao Drive, Ayala Alabang Village

GALING HOUSEKEEPING SEMINAR ***8am – 5pm***
GPM's eco-agro tourism program, BISITA PILIPINAS will enlist private homes, preferably ancestral houses, whose owners and caretakers are willing to participate in the development of a local bed and breakfast homestay program.Learn the techniques of quality housekeeping... find out how to make beds ala hotel style... know the proper use of cleaning aids... AND MORE! A well-kept house speaks of a well-run home. Seminar Fee: P100.00 for GPM Members, P200.00 for non members

YUGYOG TUGTOG PINOY WORKSHOP ***8am – 12 nn***
Learn how to develop an original Pilipino song-dance that will fuse indigenous music with pop. Develop an appreciation for local musical instruments and dance movements. Discover the uniqueness and wonder of our very own musicality and artistry.Conducted by Kontra-Gapi. Seminar Fee: P100.00 for GPM Members, P200 for non-members.

GALING SOFTBALL FOR KIDS ***2pm – 4pm***
Interact and learn the basics of softball with SOS Children's Village kids as GPM Trustee Akiko Thomson and Donna Lina, president of the Softbelles. Join this softball camp for girls. GPM will be donating softball equipment for the SOS Children's Village in Alabang. Free Snacks !!!

FREE DRINKS! Provided by COSMOS

NATURAL FARMING SEMINAR

8am to 5pm, Saturday, **February 21, 2004**
Chowking Pioneer, Mandaluyong City

Innovative Galing Pilipino seminar conducted by Andry Lim. Attend this seminar and find out how to raise pigs... WALANG HUGAS, WALANG LIGO, WALANG BAHO! BABUYAN NA HINDI AMOY BABOY. Learn how to grow CHEMICAL-FREE VEGETABLES & FRUITS. Know how to make concoctions using natural ingredients found in your backyard.

Seminar Fee: P500.00 for GPM members, P1,000.00 for non members

GP KAPIHAN

8am to 11am, Saturday, **February 28, 2004**
at Chowking Pioneer, Mandaluyong

This monthly forum presents solutions to current and relevant issues concerning various sectors through the inspirational sharing by Galing Pilipino role models .The GP Kapihan aims to encourage attendees to do the same and become significant individuals and contributors to a better society.

*Join us as we feature **"GALING NEGOSYO part 2"**.* Hear our speakers talk about their Galing business success stories.

FREE BRUNCH! Hosted by Chowking

For GPM membership particulars, call GPM Foundation Inc. at 633-1089 or 631-3932
or log on to www.galingpilipino.com

DBP

Development Bank of the Philippines

INVITATION TO BID

The Development Bank of the Philippines will receive sealed bids on February 18, 2004, 2:00 p.m., Auditorium of the DBP Head Office, Sen. Gil Puyat Avenue. cor. Makati Ave., Makati City for the following properties on CASH BASIS:

CODE	LOCATION	DESCRIPTION	MINIMUM BID
REAL ESTATE			
METRO MANILA			
AMD-EL-104	Galas, Quezon City (bounded by Luskot, Serrano Laktaw and Pedro Paterno Sts.)	2,400 m² industrial/residential lots (TCT Nos. N-171474 and 171477) with bldg. & Imprvmts.	P 25,200,000.00
CWB-12	No. 51, Bignay St., Project 2, Quezon City	203 6m² residential lot (TCT N-254994) with bldg. & imprvmts.	P 4, 517,800.00
CWB-23	No. 29, Coronet cor. Corvette St., Fairview Park Subd., Quezon City	502 m² residential lot (TCT N-255070) with bldg. & Imprvmts.	P 3, 112,800.00
AMD-ML-105	Ocean Park Avenue, Ocean Park Subd. (Bagbag), Novaliches, Quezon City	479 m² vacant residential lot (TCT N-213870)	1,724,400.00
AMD-PY-106	Lot 6, Blk. 2, DBP Village II, Almanza, Las Piñas	277 m² (TCT No. 352291)	P 1,662,000.00
AMD-ML-107	Vinegar St., Llenado Subd., Karuhatan, Valenzuela City	465 m² two (2) adjoining parcels of vacant residential lots (TCT Nos. V-61056 & V-61057)	P 1,512,000.00
BULACAN			
AMD-PY-109	Bgy. Matang Tubig, Baliuag	21,533 m² (TCT Nos. T-162317, T-162318 & T-162319) with bldg. & imprvmts.	P 15,213,500.00
NUEVA ECIJA			
CWB-1	Poblacion, Rizal	1,000 m² (TCT N-200001) w/ bldg. & Imprvmts.	P 671,900.00
QUEZON			
AMD-ML-108	Mamala, Sariaya	62,108 m² interior lot (TCT T-392734)	P 23,078,600.00
RIZAL			
CRA-32a-c	Narra St., Loremar Homes, Bo. San Isidro, Antipolo City	300 m² each vacant residential lot (TCT Nos. R-11000, R-11001 and R-11002)	P 750,000.00 per title
CHATTELS (sale on "as-is, where-is" basis)			
AMD-PAY-109a	Brgy. San Isidro, Minalin, Pampanga	1 unit 75 KVA generating set/2 units conveorized powder coating oven/1 unit shearing machine/1 unit 50-ton hydraulic machine/1 unit power press	P 1,194,000.00
AMD-PAY-109b	No. 6 Banner St., Bagong Ilog, Pasig City	1 unit PVL shrinking machine/2 units hydraulic press (250 ton capacity)	P 3,129,000.00
AMD-ML-110a	Brgy. Mamala, Sariaya, Quezon	One (1) set Feed Milling equipment	P 184,430.00
AMD-ML-110b	Brgy. Mamala, Sariaya, Quezon	Three (3) units Molasses Storage Tanks	42,750.00
AMD-ML-110c	Brgy. Mamala, Sariaya, Quezon	One (1) unit ACC Electric Generating Set	133,200.00

BIDDERS ARE REMINDED:

1. To inspect the properties to determine their actual condition before the bidding;
2. To submit in DBP's official bid form available at the AMD-Acquired Assets, 2nd Floor, DBP Head Office during office hours; and
3. To be on time. No bids will be accepted once unsealing of the bids commences. The sale shall be subject to other terms and conditions which may be imposed by the Bank.

DBP RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY OR ALL BIDS, TO WAIVE ANY FORMALITY THEREIN, OR TO ACCEPT SUCH BIDS AS MAY BE CONSIDERED MOST ADVANTAGEOUS TO THE BANK. THE DECISION OF THE BANK IS FINAL AND BINDING.

For inquiries, please call telephone numbers:
893-7172 or 818-9511 loc. 2218/2252 for Code starting with AMD; and
926-1686 or 818-9511 loc. 1411 for CWB and CRA

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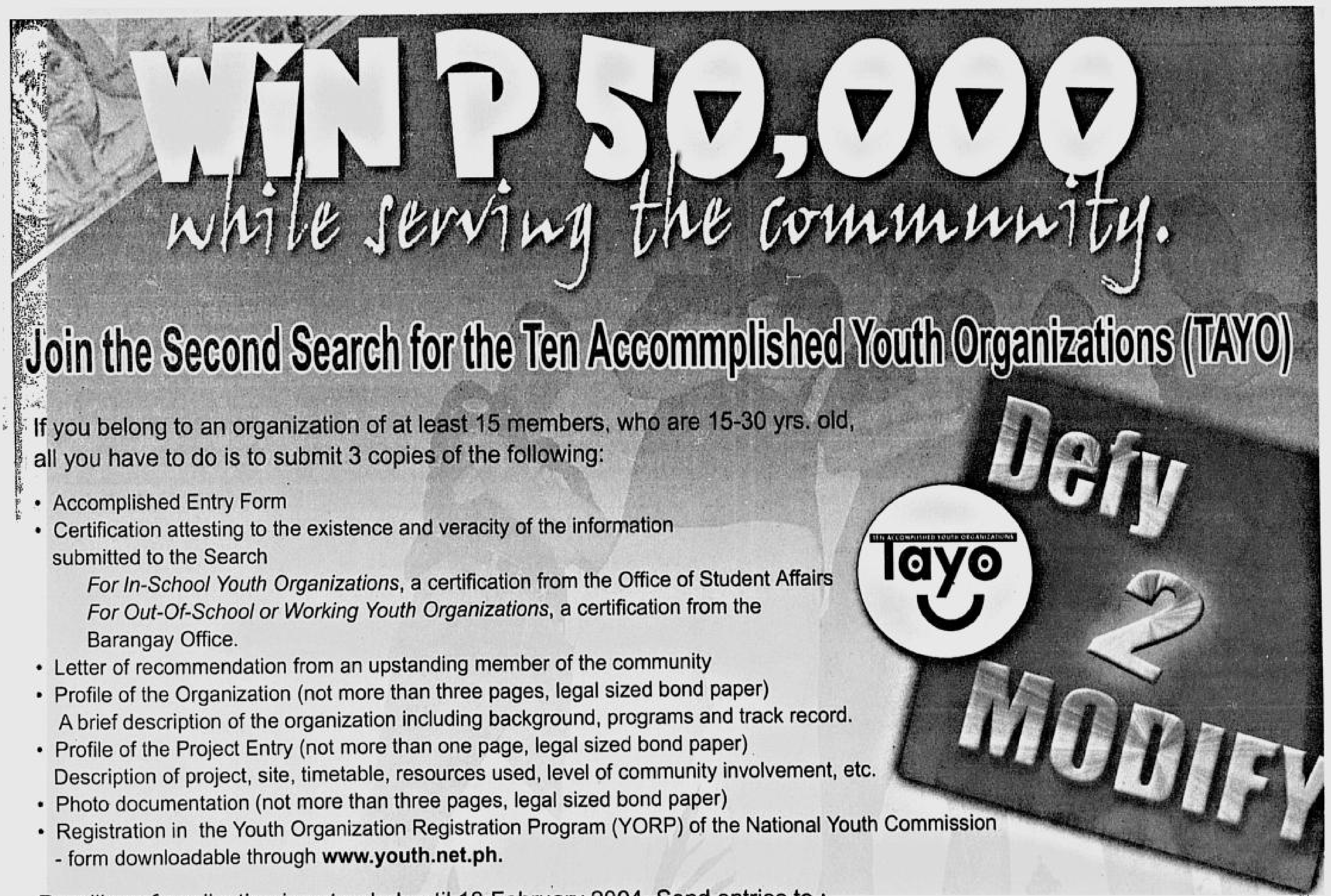
(PDI–Feb. 4 & 5, 2004)



Join the Second Search for the Ten Accommplished Youth Organizations (TAYO)

If you belong to an organization of at least 15 members, who are 15-30 yrs. old, all you have to do is to submit 3 copies of the following:

- Accomplished Entry Form
- Certification attesting to the existence and veracity of the information submitted to the Search
  For In-School Youth Organizations, a certification from the Office of Student Affairs
  For Out-Of-School or Working Youth Organizations, a certification from the Barangay Office.
- Letter of recommendation from an upstanding member of the community
- Profile of the Organization (not more than three pages, legal sized bond paper)
  A brief description of the organization including background, programs and track record.
- Profile of the Project Entry (not more than one page, legal sized bond paper)
  Description of project, site, timetable, resources used, level of community involvement, etc.
- Photo documentation (not more than three pages, legal sized bond paper)
- Registration in the Youth Organization Registration Program (YORP) of the National Youth Commission - form downloadable through **www.youth.net.ph.**

Deadline of application is extended until 13 February 2004. Send entries to :

TAYO Secretariat
4th floor Bookman Building, 373 Quezon Ave., Quezon City
Tel. Nos. 781-2323 * 781-1163 * 552-6747 * 552-6748

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G7 to cite improved global outlook

WASHINGTON— Finance officials from the Group of Seven gathering this week will cite a dramatically improved global economic outlook compared with a few months ago, a US Treasury official said Monday.

Treasury Undersecretary for International Affairs John Taylor said the G7 is expected to use a reference of 4.5 percent growth for 2004 in the global economy after 3.5 percent growth in 2003.

That would be higher than the levels seen in September by the International Monetary Fund of 4.1 percent for 2004 and 3.2 percent in 2003.

"There has been a significant improvement in the world economy" since the officials last met in Dubai, United Arab Emirates in September, Taylor told reporters ahead of the G7 finance ministers meeting opening Friday in Florida.

The US dollar traded at three-year lows against the yen Monday despite efforts by Japanese authorities to rein in their currency's climb. The greenback was at its richest euro value in roughly two weeks, although the currency pair was hemmed in ahead of the Florida meeting, with investors hesitant to take on aggressive positions ahead of the gathering.

Asked about the massive US current account deficit, which includes both trade and investment, Taylor said: "Higher growth abroad and more savings in the US will lead to a reduction of the current account deficit."

The current account deficit is seen as a major factor in the slump in the dollar. The low level of the greenback is of concern to the Europeans and Japanese because it can hurt exports from those countries and crimp their economic recoveries.

Taylor said US officials would strongly defend "with the hard facts" President George W. Bush's budget to their counterparts at the upcoming meeting. *AFP*

Global manufacturing up in Jan.

NEW YORK—Worldwide manufacturing activity accelerated in January, helped by strong global demand that has helped lift factories out of the doldrums in recent months, surveys showed on Monday.

The weakness in the US dollar gave a fresh boost to US producers, whose exports have become markedly cheaper, but at the same time is holding back the expansion in Europe and Japan, whose currencies have strengthened.

The Institute for Supply Management said its manufacturing index rose to a 20-year high of 63.6 in January, from a revised reading of 63.4 the prior month.

Although that was a touch below economists' expectations for a rise to 64, the survey has shown the strongest three-month period since 1983.

The head of the survey committee, Norbert Ore, noted the index for exports remains historically high in the upper 50s, helped by the weaker dollar.

Indeed, the fourth-quarter US GDP report released on Friday showed that exports surged by 19.1 percent in the three months to December, the strongest performance for US exports since late 1996.

Still, US factories proved reluctant to ramp up hiring to meet the surge in new orders, with a slight decline in the employment index in January.

Many in the financial markets remain concerned that the world's biggest economy is still not creating enough jobs, despite stimulus from the dollar, tax cuts and low interest rates.

Jobs growth in manufacturing and in the much bigger service sector remain critical to making consumers feel financially secure and willing to keep spending in the world's major developed economies.

Separate polls of companies in Europe and Japan also show companies chasing greater productivity rather than creating jobs as they struggle to remain competitive on exports priced in euro and yen.

Financial leaders meet this weekend at the Group of Seven summit and financial markets are focused on actions to stop the dollar from weakening further. *Reuters*

Asian stocks slide on earnings concerns

SINGAPORE—Asian stocks slid on Tuesday on concern over earnings forecasts by digital camera makers.

Camera maker Olympus Corp sank 6.6 percent in Tokyo after lowering its full-year profit forecast on Monday.

Hyundai Motor Co Ltd , South Korea's top car maker, sagged 6.3 percent on weak January sales.

Tokyo's Nikkei stock index fell 1.25 percent to 10,641.92, its weakest close since the end of last year.

"The market currently punishes those with poor earnings, but shrugs off those with good ones," said Masayoshi Okamoto, head of dealing at Jujiya Securities. "Olympus's were shocking."

MSCI's widest index of shares elsewhere in the Asia Pacific dropped 0.4 percent by 0615 GMT to its lowest since January 5, led by a 1.8 percent decline in its tech component .

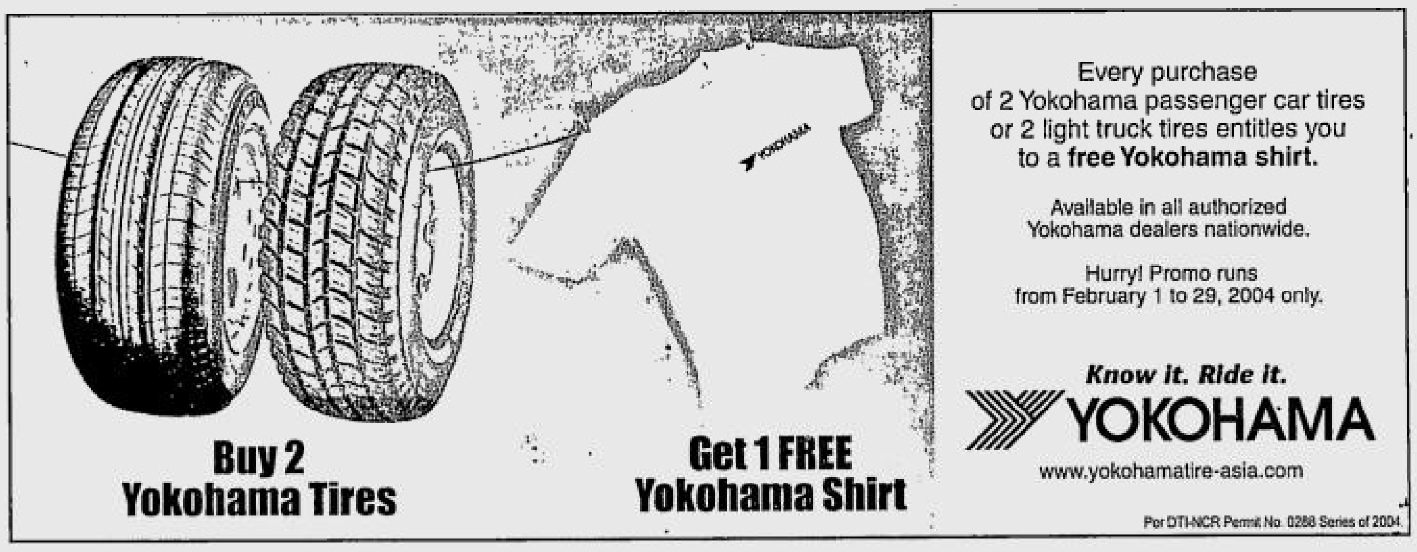
Worries over the spreading bird flu virus hurt several markets.

European stocks faced an uncertain start, with financial bookmakers forecasting the London, Paris and Frankfurt benchmarks to open between 0.3 percent weaker and 0.2 percent stronger.

The fall in Japanese stocks reflected concerns that the digital camera market may have become too competitive for manufacturers to generate hefty profits.

The Jakarta market fell three percent after the government confirmed Indonesia had the bird flu virus.

Market benchmarks fell 1.8 percent in South Korea, 0.9 percent in Singapore and 1.1 percent in Taiwan , but Hong Kong rose a third of a percent. *Reuters*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US moves to resume stalled WTO talks

WASHINGTON—The United States is mounting a new push to get world trade talks back on track, with US Trade Representative Robert Zoellick meeting his counterparts in half a dozen capitals this month, starting with Tokyo and Beijing, a US trade official said on Monday.

World trade negotiations have made little progress since their collapse over agriculture and other issues nearly five months ago in Cancun, Mexico.

Zoellick's trip to shore up prospects for a new world trade deal includes stops in Africa and Europe, as well as additional cities in Asia, the US official said.

In a bid to revive the moribund talks, Zoellick sent letters last month to the World Trade Organization's 146 member states, saying the United States was determined that 2004 not be a "lost year" for world trade negotiations.

He urged WTO members to set a mid-year deadline for reaching frameworks agreements in agriculture and other negotiating areas. Zoellick also suggested the WTO hold its next meeting in Hong Kong before the end of the year.

Since Zoellick's letter, the WTO negotiations have showed some signs of renewed life. Brazilian Foreign Minister Celso Amorim told reporters in Geneva on Monday that he sensed an increasingly positive mood toward the talks.

Zoellick was expected to leave this weekend for the two-week trip.

A spokesperson for the US Trade Representative's office confirmed Zoellick would begin in Tokyo and Beijing but said plans for other cities were not final yet. *Reuters*

S.Korea business prospects improve

SEOUL—Top South Korean companies are more upbeat about business conditions in February, supported by signs an economic recovery is gaining speed, a business lobby group said on Tuesday.

The Federation of Korean Industries said in a statement its Business Survey Index for February rose to a seasonally adjusted 113.0, up from 111.1 in January, although still below 114.4 hit last November.

The survey polled the country's top 600 companies in terms of sales between January 19 and 28.

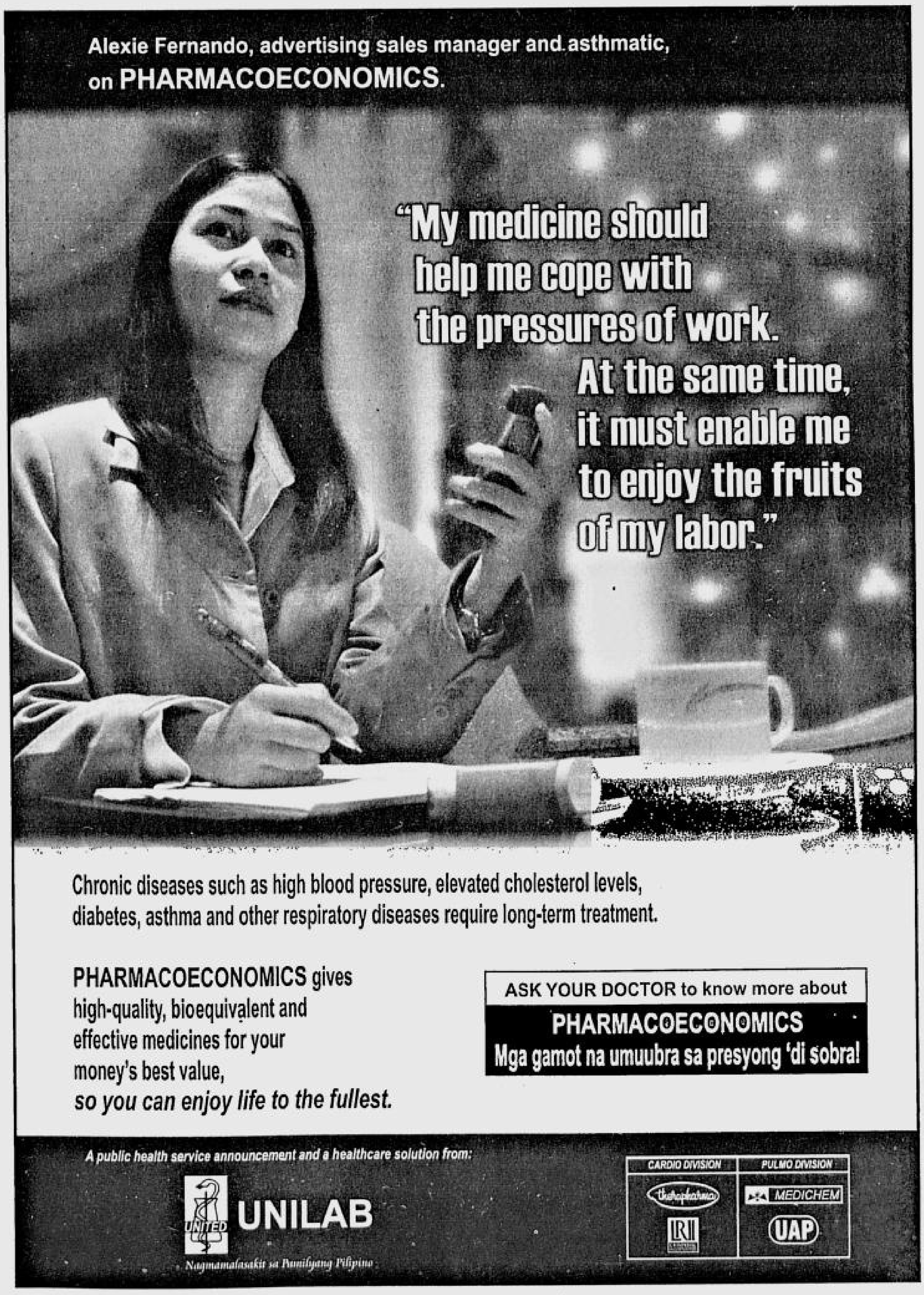
An index above 100 indicates the number of companies expecting an improvement in business conditions outnumbers those expecting a deterioration.

South Korea's economy, which slipped into its first recession in five years in the first half of 2003, crawled out of a trough in the third quarter of last year, driven by robust exports.

The country's industrial output rose an unexpectedly strong 2.7 percent in December from a month ago, providing further evidence the economy is on the mend.

However, business optimism was crimped by rising unemployment, a high number of credit delinquents and depressed domestic consumption, the federation said. *Reuters*

A MODEL shows off NEC's world's smallest, slimmest, card-shaped, camera-equipped mobile phone during its press preview in Tokyo. The latest 85mm x 54mm x 8.6mm and weighing 70 grams mobile phone will be launched in China this month. AFP


Alexie Fernando, advertising sales manager and asthmatic, on PHARMACOECONOMICS.

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Philippine Society of Hypertension & Philippine Lipid Society

JOINT 9TH ANNUAL CONVENTION

February 5-7, 2004, Edsa Shangrila Hotel, Mandaluyong City

"Linking up for Holistic Cardiovascular Control"

MESSAGES

Dear Colleagues,

It is our pleasure to welcome you to the 9th Joint Annual Convention of the Philippine Society of Hypertension and the Philippine Lipid Society.

The Philippine Society of Hypertension and the Philippine Lipid Society aim to stimulate research in hypertension, dyslipidemia and atherosclerosis, to increase awareness of the risks posedby hypertension and dyslipidemia and to improve the management of these conditions specialists and primary care physicians alike.

We also recognize that the control of these conditions require the concerted affort of physicians, co-health professionals, government and the community at large. As daunting as the task seems, we know it is going to be easier if we act together. Our annual joint convention offers a unique opportunity for all of us to meet, exchange knowledge and ideas and discuss important topics related to our common interest, the control of atherosclerotic disease through the control of hypertension and dyslipidemia as well as its other contributory conditions.

The trustees of the Philippine Society of Hypertension and the Philippine Lipid Society as well as the Organizing Committee of the Annual Convention look forward to welcoming you personally at our convention.

Esperanza I. Cabral, MD
President
Philippine Society
of Hypertension

Dr. Dante D. Morales
President
Philippine Lipid Society

MESSAGES

The Philippine Society of Hypertension and the Philippine Lipid Society welcome you to this 9th Joint Annual Convention.

This year's theme "Linking up for Holistic Cardiovascular Control" appropriately echoes the thrust and directions that the research and development has taken in the areas of hypertension and atherosclerosis on newer concepts as well as reinforcing our established approaches and modalities.

Over the years, the working relationship of specialists and cooperating agencies has been strengthened to continuously look for ways and means to link up for a better and more holistic cardiovascular disease control. It is with high hope and bright optimism that many of the things we learn on this convention will be translated into better clinical practice.

Ever cognizant of the need to improve, the PSH launched the Hypertension Specialist Program starting with an intensive course designed to give a well rounded view of hypertension. This program will be presented to the general body during this convention.

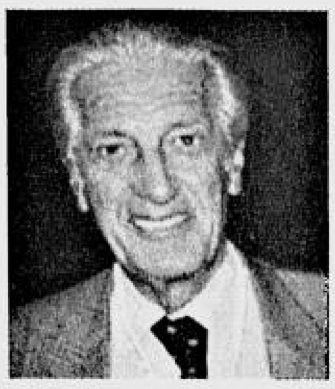
The Scientific Committee did a superb job of drawing up relevant topics interest as well as inviting effective speakers. The other working committee did no less to ensure a successful convention. Aside from a satisfying scientific discourse, we also look forward to renew old ties and meet new friends in this forum.

Mabuhay tayong lahat!

Nelson S. Abelardo, MD
Overall Chair
Joint 9th Annual Convention

A HOLISTIC approach to control and reduce mortality of atherosclerosis, hypertension and dyslipidemia will be the major focus of study and discussion of the 9th Joint Annual Convention of the Philippine Society of Hypertension and Philippine Lipid Society which opens tomorrow Feb.5 and will run until Feb.7 at the EDSA Shangrila Hotel, Mandaluyong City.

The three-day convention which has aptly adopted the theme "Linking up for Holistic Cardiovascular Control" is being held in cooperation with more than twenty of the country's top medical societies and professional health organizations.



DR. ALBERTO ZANCHETTI

The convention virtually puts together under one setting the country's foremost medical and health care professionals to tackle the the various issues and concerns and share the latest advances in the management, control and prevention of atherosclerosis, the country's top killer disease and related disorders like hypertension and dyslipidemia.

A major highlight of this year's convention will be the plenary lecture of Prof. Alberto Zanchetti, one of the founders and leading light of the International Society of Hypertension.

Zanchetti's lecture will focus on an "Assessment of Global Cardiovascular Risk."

Another major event is the presentation of the first group of certified hypertension specialists in the country.

There are 131 physicians of varying scopes of practice qualified to be designated as Hypertension Specialist. They now join the frontline in the battle to control and reduce mortality due to hypertension and other related cardiovascular ailments.

Another plenary lecture of importance will be delivered by Dr. Rody G. Sy, Chairman, of the Asia Pacific Society of Atherosclerosis and Vascular Disease. His lecture will be: "Revisiting the Metabolic Syndrome: Where Are We Now?"

A state-of-the art lecture on coronary intravascular ultrasound will be delivered by Dr. Ariel Miranda, chief of Interventional Cardiology at St. Luke's Medical Center. The procedure is one of the newest and most effective ways of diagnosing coronary artery disease..

In addition, the convention will also feature a Lay Forum on Feb. 7, (1:45 p.m.-3:30 p.m.) where experts in hypertension, cardiovascular diseases, nutrition and related fields will discuss the prevention and treatment of high blood pressure and other cardiovascular conditions.

Among the topics to be covered by the Lay Forum includes "Help!- When to see a Specialist?", "Pharmaco-econamics in the Management of Hypertension", "Complementary Management in Hypertension: Herbs and Supplements, Anyone?" and "Stress Management for Heart Patients: Don't Worry, Be Happy!"

The Lay Forum is open to the public and will be presented in very simple and effective discussion methods by the lecturers.

There will also be special sessions focusing on high blood pressure and its relationship to other conditions such as diabetes, kidney disease, strokes, heart disease, nutrition , lifestyle and other relevant topics.

Of equal importance are two breakfast sessions, the first deals with reliable automated blood pressure measuring devices, and the other, will tackle the relationship of breathing with blood pressure control.

There will be an on-site registration booth at the convention venue.

Program-at-a-Glance

	February 5 Thursday	February 6 Friday	February 7 Saturday
7:00	REGISTRATION		
7:30		BREAKFAST SESSION 1 *Wellness PRO, Inc.* Digital Blood Pressure Devices Demystified *(Isla 3)*	BREAKFAST SESSION 2 *Super Brand Distribution Corp* Breathing and Blood Pressure Control *(Isla 3)*
9:00	OPENING OF EXHIBITS OPENING CEREMONIES *(Isla 2)*	PLENARY SESSION 2 Revisiting the Metabolic Syndrome: Where Are We Now? *(Isla 2 & 3)*	PLENARY SESSION 3 Assessment of Global Cardiovascular Risk *(Isla 2 & 3)*
9:30	PLENARY SESSION 1 Developing the Hypertension Specialist: A Program Whose Time Has Come *(Isla 2 & 3)*		
10:15	STATE-OF-THE-ART-LECTURE Intravascular Ultrasound: The View From Within *(Isla 2 & 3)*	PANEL DEBATE "Debate sa Shang" Should statins be given routinely in high-risk patients with normal LDL-C levels? *(Isla 2 &3)*	CLINICAL PATHOLOGIC CONFERENCE with PANEL DISCUSSION It's not the end of the world for a Young Hypertensive! *(Isla 2 & 3)*
11:30	VISIT THE EXHIBITS		
12:00	LUNCH SATELLITE SYMPOSIUM	LUNCH SATELLITE SYMPOSIUM	LUNCH SATELLITE SYMPOSIUM
12:15	MSD *(Isla 1)* Novartis *(Isla 2)* Pfizer *(Isla 3)* Merck *(Palawan)*	Astra *(Isla 1)* Therapharma *(Isla 2)* Fournier *(Isla 3)*	Schering Plough *(Isla 1)* Fournier *(Isla 2)* Pfizer *(Isla 3)*
1:30	VISIT THE EXHIBITS	VISIT THE EXHIBITS	VISIT THE EXHIBITS
1:45	CS 1 New Answers for Old Questions in Hypertension • Circadian Rhythm of Pulse Pressure in Hypertension • Endothelial Dysfunction in Human Hypertension • Dementia Cognitive Impairment in Hypertension • Paradigm Shift in Stroke Management *(Isla 1)* CS 2 Getting the Big Picture in Atherosclerosis • Inflammatory & Infectious Etiology of Atherosclerosis • Insulin Resistance in Subclinical Atherosclerosis • Reckoning with Homocysteine • Oxidative Stress in Atherosclerosis: Big or Vague Role? *(Isla 3)*	CS 4 There's Much More in a Prescription • Prevention of Diabetes with Antihypertensive Drugs • Non Lipid/Pleiotropic Effects of Lipid Lowering Therapy • Pharmacoeconomics of Antihypertensive & Lipid-Lowering Treatment • Drug Interactions in Antiatherosclerotic Therapy *(Isla 1)* CS 5 Mechanisms and Lifestyle Therapies • Smoking and Cardiovascular Risks • Adipocytokines-The Missing Link in the Metabolic Syndrome • High Protein Diets: Boon or Bane? • Physical Activity Intervention Programs: Impact and Sustainability *(Isla 3)*	CS 6 Workplace Scene of the Crime • Stress Management in the Workplace • Why Does Coronary Artery Disease Develop? (A Case-Based Discussion) • Occupational Health Hazards and their Control • Health Promotion in the Workplace Setting *(Isla 1)* LAY FORUM Knowing is the Start of Healing • Help! When to see a Specialist? • Pharmacoeconomics in the Management of Hypertension • Complementary Management in Hypertension: Herbs and Supplement, Anyone? • Stress Management for Heart Patients: Don't Worry, Be Happy *(Isla 3)*
3:30	VISIT THE EXHIBITS	VISIT THE EXHIBITS / COFFEE BREAK	COFFEE BREAK
3:45	HOW TO SESSION • Ophthalmoscopic Evaluation of Hypertensives and Diabetics • Measurement of Blood Pressure • Bedside Maneuvers for Endothelial Dysfunction • How to Customize Dietary Counseling? • How to Calculate Cardiovascular Risk? *(Isla 1)* CS 3 The Kidney: Culprit or Victim • Aldosterone and Hypertension • Chronic Renal Disease as a Cardiovascular Risk Marker • The Role of Hyperlipidemia in the Progression of Renal Disease • Microalbuminuria as a Cardiovascular Prognosticator *(Isla 3)*	PSH BUSINESS MEETING *(Isla 1)* PLS BUSINESS MEETING *(Isla 1)* BP CERTIFICATION CLASS *(Isla 3)*	CLOSING CEREMONIES and Induction of Hypertension Specialists *(Isla 2)*
6:00	DINNER SATELLITE SYMPOSIUM	DINNER SATELLITE SYMPOSIUM	
6:15	Therapharma *(Isla 2 & 3)*	Solvay Pharma *(Isla 3)*	
7:00			

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A big step forward for hypertension control

By the Trustees of the Philippine Society of Hypertension

TERRORISM is a big threat to everyone these days. Whether one is riding an airplane, visiting some friends in Mindanao, or even just shopping in the mall, one can't help but be worried that he may become part of the statistic as one of the victims of whatever form of terrorism. Before entering a 5-star hotel or mall, everyone is frisked for any form of explosives. Little does one suspect that they may be harboring a deadlier kind of bomb inside them. In their system may be an unrecognized terrorist that can just suddenly explode to a serious and potentially fatal complication. Many adults are unknowing victims of this 'terrorist', which is a silent but deadly killer. It may be present for a long time already without causing any symptom that can make one suspect it. It's a truly sly killer, snapping the life out of its victims at the peak of their careers. Once it hits, it

can be beyond control. This terrorist is none other than one of the leading causes of cardiovascular complications and deaths. This silent killer is hypertension. Anyone whose blood pressure (BP) is confirmed to be equal to or more than 140 over 90 mm Hg has hypertension.

If you are unaware that you have hypertension, then you are a walking candidate to get hit by a stroke, a condition wherein the brain's arteries either get occluded or burst from the excessively high pressure. Strokes, the deadliest complication of hypertension, can leave its victims debilitated, paralyzed or dead. And we are not talking about a few potential victims here. We're talking here of thousands of actual victims annually. It's really mass terrorism. The Philippine Society of Hypertension (PSH) has launched the Hypertension Specialist Program and we hope to develop as many hypertension specialists as we can all over the country who can establish Hypertension Clinics, so many of our countrymen who have high blood pressure can be detected early before complications set in.

The PSH is most pleased with the big success of its first-ever Hypertension Course at the Philippine Heart Center. We originally intended to limit the participants to 150, but we had to give in to the overwhelming response of medical practitioners from all over the country, who had persevered for three consecutive week-ends to attend the lectures, blood pressure (BP) certification and case discussions. A total of 340 aspiring hypertension specialists completed the course.

The Hypertension Course was a comprehensive review of the basic science of hypertension, its clinical features, prevention, evaluation and treatment of essential (cause not known), and secondary forms (with identifiable cause) of high BP. Being also important in the better understanding of hypertension, we studied the co-morbidities (concomitant illnesses) since high BP does not usually come as an isolated problem but as part of a constellation or cluster of abnormalities including diabetes, cholesterol problems and obesity. Addressing all these risk factors altogether is imperative in effectively preventing cardiovascular disease.

Adequate time was also spent for many other special aspects such as drugs causing BP (which occasionally results from self-medication), and miscellaneous forms of hypertension such as obstructive sleep apnea (OSA) commonly seen in obese individuals who snore.

Importantly, we have taken lessons on how to evaluate claims of unproven remedies - popularly advertised in the media - with the main objective of protecting the patient's welfare from any potential harm from taking these unproven medications and setting aside what proven therapies might cause. Hypertensive patients should not take any of these unproven treatments without the approval of their physicians.

The PSH twin activity, consisting of the Hypertension Course and the Specialist Program, was actually borne out of desperation that the problem of hypertension is growing to epidemic proportions in the Philippines and we are not able to cope with it. Obviously, we cannot solve the problem overnight. But with the Hypertension Course and Specialist Certification Program, the PSH hopes to enlist as many medical practitioners as possible who are willing to learn more and apply whatever they have learned for the better care of their hypertensive patients.

Licking hypertension however requires a big team effort. It requires specialists from various specialties to come together and participate as a team in the overall management of the patient with high blood pressure. The PSH and the Philippine Lipid Society (PLS) are having their joint annual convention on February 5-7, 2004 at the EDSA Shangri La Hotel to discuss updates for a more effective control of cardiovascular diseases. The convention theme is "Linking Up for Holistic Cardiovascular Control" and it highlights the necessary collaboration of various specialists to effectively manage and prevent multi-organ complications in a hypertensive patient.

A scientific forum for lay individuals is also being prepared and interested parties may attend free of charge. (For reservations, please call the PSH-PLS office at tel. nos. 687-7073 and 687-2841, or text 0919 4260905 or 0917 7417595). With the success of the programs of the PSH and the various cooperating organizations, control of hypertension and its cardiovascular complications may be achievable in the foreseeable future. With the establishment of Hypertension Clinics all over the country, you may just find yourself being 'searched' inside public places, not for external bombs, but to have your blood pressure checked. It's about time we find out who the walking time bombs in our midst are. Before they explode.

Empowering patients through pharmacoeconomics

Times though have changed. Patients now have become more involved in their health. One of the main factors that brought about that change is the economic crisis.

TRADITIONALLY, patients have been a passive, powerless recipient of medical care provided by their attending physicians. Patients seldom asked questions about their medicines and obligingly bought their doctors' prescription.

Times though have changed. Patients now have become more involved in their health. One of the main factors that brought about that change is the economic crisis. As the cost of medicines increase, patients also became more practical. Even those who can afford expensive medicines are asking their physicians for more affordable and equally effective brands of medicines especially in the long-term treatment of chronic illnesses such as high blood pressure, cholesterol problems, diabetes, tuberculosis and asthma. This is the principle of pharmacoeconomics.

The idea of pharmacoeconomics is to present the patients alternatives to the more expensive drugs, with the goal of making sure that the medicine is taken by the patient strictly according to his medical decision and prescription. In a country where majority of the population is in poor financial state, the meager income of an average wage income earner will not have much room for costly medicines that have to be taken on a long-term basis. Through pharmacoeconomics, patients with chronic disease will have the capability of maintaining their treatment regimen without compromising the other needs of their families.

The affordability of the drug does not mean that it has an inferior quality. In fact, for a medicine to be considered pharmacoeconomically sound, it should provide the same quality as the originator drug. A generic or brand product which has been shown by appropriate tests to be bioequivalent to the standard or innovator drug can be used as an alternative to the latter.

Another goal of pharmacoeconomics is to assure that patients suffering from chronic diseases that require life-long medication can comply with their treatment. With better patient compliance and a more regular intake of medicines, they can be assured of greater protection from their diseases. Complications and irreversible injury to the body's vital organs can also be prevented.

The introduction of pharmacoeconomics is seen to benefit more patients with chronic illness. The burden of chronic diseases is now of epidemic proportions worldwide. In 2001, chronic diseases contributed approximately 59 percent of the 56.5 million total reported deaths in the world and 46 percent of the global burden of disease. In the Philippines, six out of the top ten causes of morbidity are due to chronic diseases.

Aside from knowing the alternative medicine for their diseases, patients could also help their treatment process by educating themselves about their illnesses. Practical experience is showing that today's patients with chronic diseases need not be mere recipients of care. For example, patients are now more involved in knowing how to recognize and act upon symptoms, dealing with acute attacks or exacerbations of the disease, making the most effective use of medicines and treatments, assessing social and other services, dealing with fatigue, managing work and developing strategies to deal with the psychological consequences of their illness.

The knowledge and experience of patients have been an untapped resource in the field of medicine. Like their doctors, patients can become key decision-makers in the treatment process. The patients' active participation, physicians' expertise and affordable and effective medicines could greatly benefit the quality of patients' care and ultimately their quality of life.

Therapharma Inc and the various divisions of Unilab, a leading pharmaceutical company in the country, is committed to helping improve the healthcare delivery to the average Filipino family by providing them with high-quality and affordable medicines for common medical problems. Its commitment is reflected in its slogan: "Mga gamot na umuubra sa presyong 'di sobra!"

Metabolic syndrome a cluster of woes

By Rafael R. Castillo, MD

ROLLY is a middle-aged executive in a big insurance firm. He is a little overweight but that was not really a big issue for him. The extra weight was only around the stomach, and it has apparently never bothered him. He considered himself still perfectly healthy.

Little did Rolly realize that his being a little pleasantly plump was the only visible sign of a little-known but potentially deadly disorder called metabolic syndrome. That was until he was rushed to the nearby emergency room for a heart attack. He had a stormy course in the hospital. Fortunately, he survived his heart attack. And he never made a jest anymore about being "pleasantly plump".

Until the last five years, metabolic syndrome, also known as Syndrome X, was not a well recognized entity. Various studies have now shown that men with metabolic syndrome are. at significantly greater risk of dying from a heart attack and other cardiovascular diseases (CVD).

This has been evolving now for several years," said Dr. Steven Nissen, a cardiologist at the Cleveland Clinic Foundation. "This disease, the metabolic syndrome, is really the disease of the new millennium. We now understand that men and women with this syndrome constitute the group at the greatest risk of death from heart attack."

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that one in five adults already has metabolic syndrome, and that the numbers will continue to grow because of the prevailing sedentary lifestyle, with people more inclined to watch TV rather than exercise.

The metabolic syndrome has been there for a while," said Dr. Richard Nesto, a professor at the Harvard Medical School and a clinician at the Lahey Clinic in Boston. "We just have not recognized its importance."

I think doctors in the past have looked at patients without looking at the big picture," he said. "They've looked at risk factors in isolation and treated them one by one. Now we should look at patients as to whether they have the metabolic syndrome."

Increased insulin or hyperinsulinemia with resulting insulin resistance is reported to have an unfavorable effect on the cardiovascular system, specifically on the blood vessels, making them less flexible and more prone to progressive narrowing known as atherosclerosis.

If you look at the individual risk factors they don't look all that grave by themselves," said Dr. Nissen. "But you put them together and they equal a lot more than the sum of the parts. And that's what a study like this shows."

A new study recently published in the Journal of the American Medical Association has shown that middle-aged men with the syndrome are more likely to develop CVD or coronary heart disease (CHD), or to die from any cause compared with men without the syndrome.

Researchers studied a cohort of 1209 Finnish men who, at baseline, were between the ages of 42 and 60 and had no history of CVD, cancer, or diabetes. They obtained data on potential cardiovascular risk factors, including age, body mass index or BMI, waist circumference and waist-to-hip ratio, smoking status, blood pressure, blood lipids, blood glucose, and insulin metabolism. They then tracked the cases of CVD, CHD, and death that occurred during approximately 11 years of follow-up.

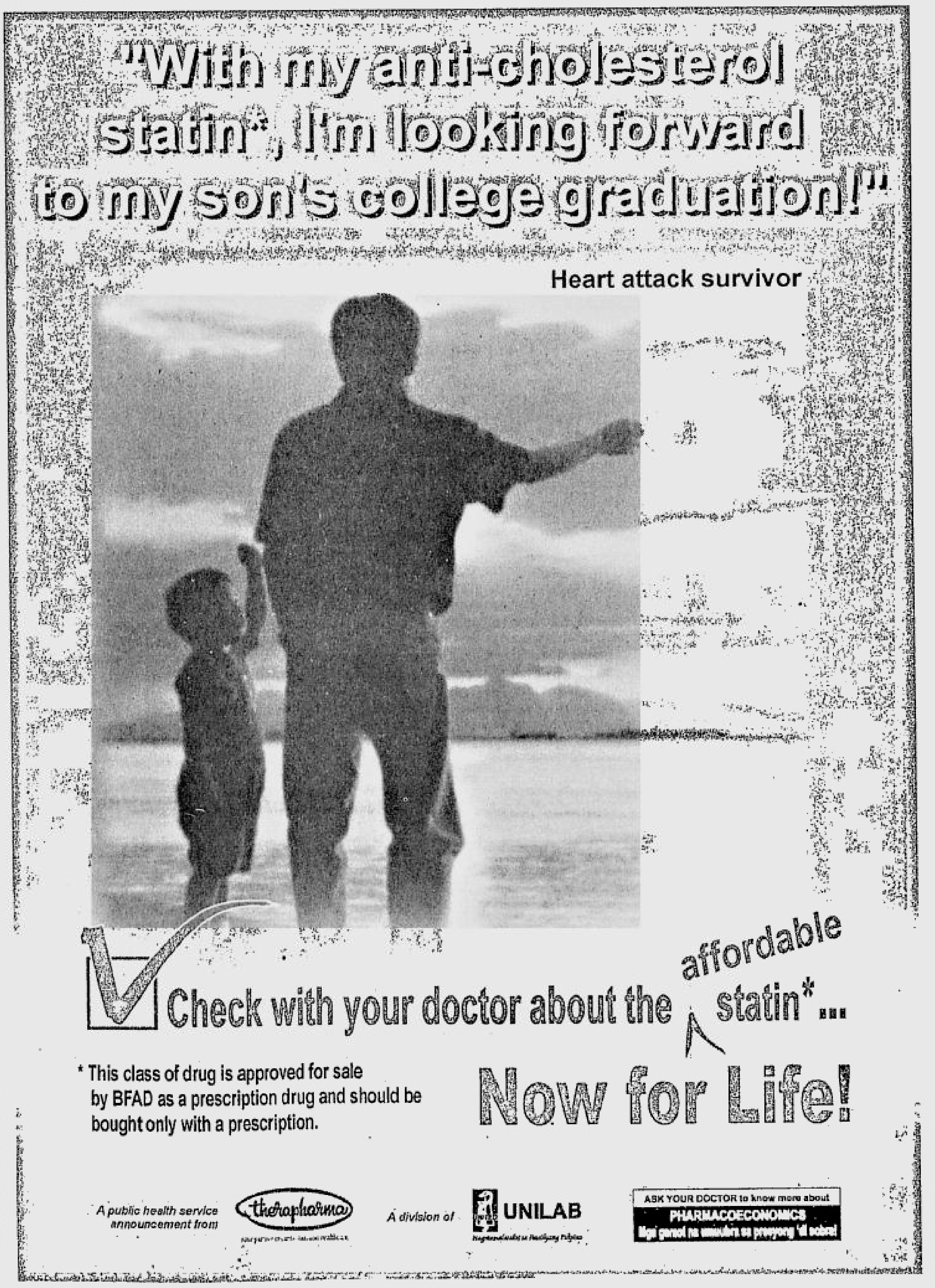
Over this long study period, the researchers found that those with metabolic syndrome were from 2.9 to 4.2 times more likely to die of a heart attack than those who did not have the condition.

To our knowledge, this is the first prospective population-based cohort study reporting the association of the metabolic syndrome using recently proposed definitions with cardiovascular and overall mortality," study author Dr. Hanna-Maaria Lakka of Louisiana State University wrote in the journal.

Previous research has shown that people with Syndrome X have hypercoagulable blood. They also are more likely to rupture their atherosclerotic plaque in the bloodstream that promotes thrombosis.

I see now, patients in their 20s and 30s with the metabolic syndrome and this does not bode well for their risk of heart attack and stroke when they reach 40 or 50 years of age," said Dr. Nesto.

While medications can treat some of the problems of Syndrome X or metabolic syndrome, the best solution is the simplest, that is, exercising regularly, getting more physical activity and losing weight-even if one is not that overweight, just a little on the plump side. This remains as the most important therapeutic intervention one can take if one has Syndrome X.



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PEOPLE at WORK

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Couple touches people's lives through comic strip

RINA and David Shelton with their two sons (L-R) Nicholas and Michael.
BETOY JOHNSON

By Candy G. Villanueva

IN the first panel, a bespectacled woman looks over the shoulder of her balding husband. The hubby declares he's looking at some minivans advertised in the car magazines. The next scenes show the couple mulling over the choices. "I kinda like that one," says the wife with glasses almost covering half of her face. Last panel shows the excited husband as he says, "She's a looker, isn't she?" Wife crosses arms a bit miffed and goes, "Focus on the minivan please!"

The little marital scenario is a scene from the comic strip, "Ben." It shows a slice of life of a typical suburban family in a town in Canada or maybe the United States. The situations are humorous but also mirror the everyday life of most suburban families.

Daily lives

Unknown to many, half the heart behind the comic strip "Ben" is actually a Filipino. She is Rina Mapa and she comes from a family of distinguished artists like actor Koko Trinidad, journalist Lina Flor, comedian Noel Trinidad and political cartoonist Corky Trinidad. She is married to the other half of "Ben," a thoughtful and talented artist from Canada, Daniel Shelton.

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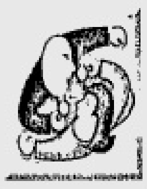

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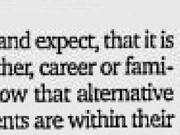

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PEOPLE at WORK

E-mail: peopleatwork@inquirer.com.ph

Editor Raul O. Marcelo
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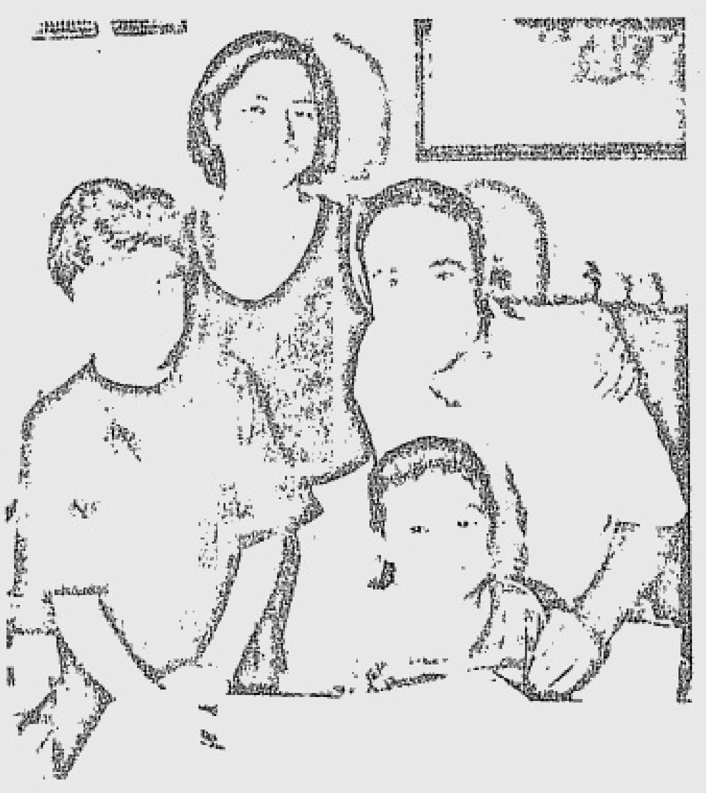
Couple touches people's lives through comic strip



RINA and David Shelton with their two sons (L-R) Nicholas and Michael. BETOY JOHNSON

By Candy G. Villanueva

IN the first panel, a bespectacled woman looks over the shoulder of her balding husband. The hubby declares he's looking at some minivans advertised in the car magazines. The next scenes show the couple mulling over the choices. "I kinda like that one," says the wife with glasses almost covering half of her face. Last panel shows the excited husband as he says, "She's a looker, isn't she?" Wife crosses arms a bit miffed and goes, "Focus on the minivan please!"

The little marital scenario is a scene from the comic strip, "Ben." It shows a slice of life of a typical suburban family in a town in Canada or maybe the United States. The situations are humorous but also mirror the everyday life of most suburban families.

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THE FOREST Hills Ladies Circle is hosting its 3rd Annual Valentine Golf tournament on Feb. 9, 2004 (Monday) at the Forest Hills Golf and Country Club, Antipolo City. Tee-off time will be 6:30-9:30 a.m. The format will be Molave point system. Everyone is invited to join this charitable project.

Proceeds of this Tournament will go to selected patients in the Philippine General Hospital assisting the much neglected teenage category in need of medical assistance and the Kythe Foundation supporting the cancer stricken children.

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INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY TO BID

The provincial government of Zamboanga del Norte hereby invites duly licensed manufacturers, suppliers and/or distributors who met the following criteria, to apply for Eligibility to Bid for the supply of goods and/or services which may be procured within the calendar year, viz:

a) Duly licensed Filipino citizens/sole proprietorships;
b) Partnerships duly organized under the laws of the Philippines and of which at least sixty percent (60%) of the interest belongs to citizens of the Philippines;
c) Corporations duly organized under the laws of the Philippines, and of which at least sixty percent (60%) of the outstanding capital stock belongs to citizens of the Philippines;
d) Manufacturers, suppliers and/or distributors forming themselves into a joint venture, *i.e.*, a group of two (2) or more manufacturers, suppliers and/or distributors that intend to be jointly and severally responsible or liable for a particular contract: *Provided, however,* That Filipino ownership or interest of the joint venture concerned shall be at least sixty percent (60%); or
e) Cooperatives duly registered with the Cooperatives Development Authority (CDA).

Interested parties are required to submit a Letter of Intent together with the following documents to the Bids and Awards Committee, c/o Provincial General Services Office, Capitol Building, Dipolog City, viz: (Sec. 23.6-IRR-A R.A. 9184)

Class "A" Documents –

Legal Documents

a) Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) business name registration or SEC registration certificate, whichever may be appropriate under existing laws of the Philippines;
b) Valid and current Mayor's permit/municipal license;
c) Taxpayer's Identification Number;
d) Statement of the prospective bidder that it is not "blacklisted" or barred from bidding by the Government or any of its agencies, offices, Implementing Rules and Regulations of Republic Act No. 9184 corporations or LGUs, including non-inclusion in the Consolidated Blacklisting Report issued by the GPPB, once released in accordance with the guidelines to be issued by the GPPB as provided in Section 69.4 of this IRR-A;
e) For prospective bidders of hospital supplies and equipments the following will be submitted in addition to the above:
   - License to operate as Drug Manufacturer, Distributor or Supplier whichever is applicable issued by the BFAD;
   - License to operate, as manufacturer, distributor or supplier of supplies of Medical/Dental/Laboratory/X-ray supplies and equipment issued by BFAD;
   - Supplier's Accreditation issued by the Department of Health;
   - Distributorship Agreement issued by principals.

Financial Documents

a) Audited Financial Statements stamped "received" by the BIR or its duly accredited and authorized institutions, for the immediately preceding calendar year, showing among others, the prospective bidders total and current assets and liabilities.

Class "B" Documents –

a) Letter authorizing the BAC or its duly authorized representative/s to verify any or all the documents submitted for eligibility check;
b) Disclosure of Relations (Sec. 47 of IRR-A, R.A. 9184)

A sworn affidavit of the bidder that it is not related to the head of the procuring entity by consanguinity or affinity up to the third civil degree. Failure to comply with the aforementioned provision shall be a ground for the automatic disqualification of the bid in consonance with Section 30 of this IRR-A. On the part of the bidder, this provision shall apply to the following persons:

a) If the bidder is an individual or a sole proprietorship, to the bidder himself;
b) If the bidder is a partnership, to all its officers and members;
c) If the bidder is a corporation, to all its officers, directors, and controlling stockholders; and
d) If the bidder is a joint venture, the provisions of items (a), (b) or (c) of this Section shall correspondingly apply to each of the members of the said joint venture, as may be appropriate.

Pursuant to the provisions of Republic Act 9184, otherwise known as the Government Procurement Reform Act, only eligible and accredited suppliers will be allowed to participate in any government bidding that will be conducted. In view thereof, those who are interested are required to submit the documents enumerated earlier, not later than February 13, 2004.

(Sgd.) **ELIZABETH G. BARBASO**
Provincial General Services Office
Acting Chairman-Bids & Awards Committee

(PDI–February 4, 2004)

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION and COMMUNICATIONS

METRO RAIL TRANSIT CORPORATION

GOVERNMENT SERVICE INSURANCE SYSTEM

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

(Reinsurance for MRTC's Industrial All Risks Policy)

The GSIS-MRTC-DOTC Joint Bidding Committee (JBC) thru its Eligibility & Evaluation Group (EEG) is inviting qualified local and foreign reinsurance companies/brokers to apply for eligibility and to bid for the renewal of reinsurance for the Metro Rail Transit Corporation's Industrial All Risks Policy, with an indicative budget of US$6.5 Million all inclusive, for the period 4:00PM of February 28, 2004 to 4:00PM of February 28, 2005.

SCHEDULE OF ACTIVITIES

Issuance of Eligibility & Bidding Documents	February 2, 2004-February 16, 2004 9:00 A.M.-5:00 P.M. JBC Secretariat 5th Flr., GSIS H.Q. OSVP-GIG, Roxas Blvd., Manila
Pre-Bid Conference	February 9, 2004 9:00 A.M., 7th Floor Room A, GSIS Bldg. Roxas Blvd., Manila
Submission & Opening of Eligibility & Bid Envelopes	February 17, 2004 2:00 P.M. Office of the Chairman Room A, 7th Floor GSIS Bldg., Roxas Blvd., Manila

For applicant-foreign reinsurers and applicant-brokers with foreign lead reinsurers, the foreign reinsurer must have a credit rating of at least "AA-" from a reputable rating agency as of September 2003 or the latest available rating, and certify that it will provide a lead line of least 20% of the reinsured risk. Domestic and Foreign lead reinsurers must have a net worth of at least Php2.0 Billion as of December 31, 2003.

Eligibility and Bid documents shall be issued to applicants upon filing a Letter of Intent to Apply and payment of a non-refundable fee of US$1,000.00 to the Government Service Insurance System.

All particulars relative to Eligibility Screening, Pre-Bid Conference, Evaluation of Bid, Sufficiency of Bid Security, Post-Qualification and Award of Contract shall be governed by the provision of existing laws, rules and regulations.

The JBC and EEG reserve the right to reject any and all bids or Letters of Intent, waive any defect therein and accept the offer which they deem responsive and most advantageous to the government.

NORA M. SALUDARES
Acting Senior Vice-President
General Insurance Group
GSIS

(PDI – Jan.27 & 28 and Feb. 3 & 4, 2004)

SUPREME COURT OF THE PHILIPPINES
AND
DEPARTMENT OF BUDGET AND MANAGEMENT
Joint Circular No. 2004-1
13 January 2004

FOR : CONCERNED OFFICIALS OF THE SUPREME COURT AND THE JUDICIARY AND THE DEPARTMENT OF BUDGET AND MANAGEMENT AND ALL OTHERS CONCERNED

SUBJECT : GUIDELINES TO COVER THE FUNDING SOURCE FOR THE GRANT OF SPECIAL ALLOWANCE AUTHORIZED UNDER REPUBLIC ACT NO. 9227

1.0 PURPOSE

1.1 This Joint Circular is issued pursuant to Section 7 of Republic Act No. 9227 that states: "The Supreme Court and the Department of Budget and Management shall issue the necessary guidelines for the proper implementation of this Act in respect to funds coming from the National Treasury within ninety (90) days from approval hereof."

2.0 GENERAL GUIDELINES

2.1 The funds necessary for the implementation of the special allowance of Justices and Judges and all other positions in the Judiciary with the equivalent rank of Justices of the Court of Appeals and Judges of the Regional Trial Court shall be sourced from:

2.1.1 Legal fees originally prescribed, imposed and collected under Rule 141 of the Rules of Court prior to the promulgation of the amendments under Presidential Decree No. 1949, dated 18 July 1984; and

2.1.2 Increases in current fees and new fees which may be imposed and collected by the Supreme Court after the effectivity of Republic Act No. 9227.

2.2 Effective immediately, collections of the Judiciary from funds enumerated under Items 2.1.1 and 2.1.2 above shall no longer be remitted to the National Treasury. Instead, these shall be deposited in an authorized government depository bank as may be determined by the Supreme Court. Collections made and deposited with the National Treasury from 11 November 2003 until the effectivity of this Joint Circular shall be made available to the Judiciary for the grant of special allowance authorized under Republic Act No. 9227.

2.3 The "basic monthly salary" in Section 2 of Republic Act No. 9227 is that specified for the respective salary grades of justices and judges under Republic Act No. 6758, as amended.

2.4 The Supreme Court shall constitute a fund to be known as the Special Allowance for the Judiciary (SAJ) Fund for the grant of special allowance authorized under R.A. No. 9227.

2.5 For the first three years of implementation, the amount needed to implement the special allowance shall be sourced from the collections from Items 2.1.1 and 2.1.2 above. On the fourth year of implementation or in 2007, the National Government shall provide additional funds for the purpose but not to exceed the amount of One Hundred Sixty Five Million Pesos (PHP 165,000,000.00)

3.0 PROCEDURAL GUIDELINES

3.1 Effective 11 November 2003 collections under Items 2.1.1 and 2.1.2 above already deposited with the Bureau of Treasury (BTr) shall be released to the Supreme Court by the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) following the guidelines enumerated hereunder:

3.1.1 The Supreme Court shall transfer income (under Items 2.1.1 and 2.1.2 above) as deposited with the BTr from 11 November 2003 until the effectivity of this Joint Circular, recorded in their respective general fund books to trust fund through journal entry voucher (JEV).

3.1.2 The Supreme Court shall request the BTr to transfer income referred to in Items 2.1.1 and 2.1.2 above from the general fund to trust liabilities.

3.1.3 The BTr shall issue certification supported by JEV attesting to the transfer of the subject income from the general fund to trust liabilities.

3.1.4 The Supreme Court shall request DBM to issue Notice of Cash Allocation (NCA), supported by their Report of Income for the same period, copy of the BTr certification and JEV.

3.1.5 The DBM shall issue the NCA corresponding to the income certified by the BTr, to be credited to the regular account under the Modified Disbursement System (MDS) of the Supreme Court.

3.1.6 Upon receipt of the NCA, the Supreme Court shall draw MDS check to transfer the amount to the SAJ Fund of the Supreme Court in the authorized government depository bank which was opened for this purpose.

3.2. The funds needed for the first three years of implementation shall be sourced from Items 2.1.1 and 2.1.2 above.

3.3. At the end of the third year of implementation of R.A. No. 9227, a report of income shall be submitted by the Supreme Court to the DBM indicating the total collections for the year, actual disbursements made and the balance of the SAJ Fund, if any.

3.4. During the fourth year of implementation and thereafter, if the funds collected are insufficient to cover the payment of subject special allowance, the Supreme Court shall submit to the DBM at the end of each quarter a request to cover the release of the amount needed for the deficiency, together with the following documentation:

a) Total requirement needed, indicating the actual number of filled positions entitled thereto, and their corresponding basic monthly salaries as certified by the Deputy Clerk of Court and Chief Administrative Officer of the Supreme Court, and

b) Collections mentioned under Items 2.1.1 and 2.1.2 above and the deficiency or balance to be subsidized by the National Government as certified by the Chief Accountant of the Supreme Court.

The fourth year of implementation shall be understood to cover the period 11 November 2006 to 10 November 2007.

3.5 The deficiency shall be computed and released by the DBM on a quarterly basis provided that the total amount released during the year shall not exceed One Hundred Sixty Five Million Pesos (PHP 165,000,000.00)

3.6 The Accounting Entries shall be prescribed by the Commission on Audit.

4.0. GOVERNING CLAUSE

Cases not covered by the provision of this Joint Circular shall be resolved jointly by the Secretary of the DBM and the Court Administrator of the Supreme Court.

5.0 EFFECTIVITY

This Joint Circular shall take effect immediately.

PRESBITERO J. VELASCO, JR.
Court Administrator
Supreme Court of the Philippines

EMILIA T. BONCODIN
Secretary
Department of Budget and Management

(PDI – February 4, 2004)

Republic of the Philippines
LOCAL CIVIL REGISTRY OFFICE
Province: Bukidnon
Municipality: Kitaotao

NOTICE OF POSTING

In compliance with Section 5 of R.A. 9048, a notice is hereby served to the PUBLIC that RENEHART OLHON MANGA has filed with this Office a petition for

CHANGE OF FIRST NAME, from "RENE" to "RENEHART" and in the CERTIFICATE OF LIVE BIRTH of RENEHART OLHON MANGA.

Any person having knowledge and / or claiming interest or may be adversely affected by said petition may, within ten (10) calendar days, file his written opposition with this Office.

Date: Jan. 20, 2004

(Sgd.) LEONILA B. GALORPORT
Municipal Civil Registrar

(PDI–Jan. 28 & Feb. 4, 2004)

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Republic of the Philippines
Province of Cebu
Bids and Awards Committee
Cebu Capitol, Cebu City

Invitation to Apply for Eligibility and to Bid

The Provincial Government of Cebu through its BIDS and AWARDS COMMITTEE (BAC) invites qualified Contractors with minimum of "B" License and registered with the Philippine Contractors Accreditation Board (PCAB) as Medium "A" for Buildings to apply for eligibility and to submit sealed bids for the Proposed Expansion & Repair/Renovation of Barili District Hospital, Barili, Cebu, charged against the Continuing Appropriation CY 2001 for 20% Development Fund, Highways, Roads & Buildings, under PR # 04-35 dated 01-06-04 ALOBS # 100-04-01-386 dated 01-26-04 with an Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC) of P6,015,136.51.

Interested parties are requested to submit a Letter of Intent and updated documents to the Chairman, Bids and Awards Committee (BAC), through the BAC Secretariat prior to the issuance of the Plans and Bid Documents.

Major Items of Work Involved

Carpentry Works
Masonry Works
Carpentry Works

Minimum Equipment Requirements:

Equipment Type	
Concrete Mixer, 1 bagger,	Owned
Welding Machine	Owned
Bar Cutter	Owned
Minor Tools	Owned

Schedule for the Procurement Activities:

	Dates	Time	Place
Submittal of Letter of Intent & Issuance of Eligibility Forms	Feb. 4-10, 2004	8:00-5:00 P.M.	PGSO, BAC Secretariat
Deadline for submission of Eligibility Documents	Feb. 13, 2004	8:00-5:00 P.M.	PGSO, BAC Secretariat
Issuance of Notice to Eligible Bidders	Feb. 20, 2004	8:00-5:00 P.M.	PGSO, BAC Secretariat
Issuance of Plans and Bid documents	Feb. 23, 2004	8:00-5:00 P.M.	PGSO, BAC Secretariat
Pre-bidding Conference	Feb. 26, 2004	10:00 A.M.	PGSO, BAC Secretariat
Public Bidding	March 09, 2004	10:00 A.M.	PGSO, BAC Secretariat

Only Bids within the Approved Budget for the Contract to be bid will be accepted.

Plans and Bid Documents can be obtained from the BAC Secretariat, PGSO, DEP-ED Bldg., Cebu Capitol, Cebu City upon payment of non-refundable amount of P3,000.00

All particulars relative to the eligibility process, bidding, evaluation of bids, post qualification and award of contract shall be governed by the Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR-A) of Republic Act No. 9184, otherwise known as the Government Procurement Reform Act.

The Bids and Awards Committee of the Province of Cebu reserves the right to reject any or all bids to waive any defects or formality therein and to accept bids considered complying and most advantageous to the Government.

For more information please contact the BAC Secretariat at Tel. No. 253-9114 / 253-3981. This requirement is also posted at the PGSO Bulletin Board, DEP-ED Bldg., Capitol, Cebu City.

(Sgd.) EDUARDO T. HABIN
Chairman

(PDI – February 4 & 10, 2004)

Republic of the Philippines
Department of Education
Third Elementary Education Project
Bids and Awards Committee

Invitation for Bids (IFB)
(IFB No. RBN-SBP-05-03)

February 04, 2004

To All Qualified Bidders:

1. The Government of the Republic of the Philippines has received a loan from the Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC) towards the cost of financing the Third Elementary Education Project (TEEP) and intends to apply part of the funds to cover eligible payments for civil works component of the project. Bidding is open to all bidders classified by and registered with Inter-Agency Committee (IAC) on registration and classification of at least Small "B" for building from eligible source countries as defined in the Guidelines for Procurement under the JBIC Loans.
2. The Division Bids and Awards Committee (BAC) invites sealed bids from eligible bidders for the following packages:

   Package 5: RBN-03-003-0060
   Municipality of Magdiwang:
   Repair of Three (3) Classrooms School Building at Ambulong PS and
   Repair of Six (6) Classrooms School Building at Tampayan ES
   Package 9: RBN-05-003-0063
   Municipality of Corcuera:
   Repair of Six (6) Classrooms School Building at Corcuera CS and
   Repair of Two (2) Classrooms School Building at Tacasan ES
   Package 10: RBN-05-004-0064
   Municipality of Corcuera:
   Repair of Three (3) Classrooms School Building at Gobon ES and
   Repair of Six (6) Classrooms School Building at Alegria ES
   Package 11: RBN-12/03-007/004-0065
   Municipality of San Fernando:
   Repair of Three (3) Classrooms School Building at Teresa Bernas ES and
   Municipality of Cajidiocan:
   Repair of Three (3) Classrooms School Building at Cambalo ES
   Package 12: RBN-13-007-0066
   Municipality of San Jose:
   Repair of Nine (9) Classrooms School Building at San Jose CS
3. Bidding documents may be purchased at DepEd Division Office of Romblon, Division Project Implementation Support Unit (DPISU) for Third Elementary Education Project (TEEP) with address at Brgy. Capaclan, Romblon, Romblon for a nonrefundable fee of Php 1,500.00 for each set. Interested bidders may obtain further information at the same address.
4. A pre-bid conference will be held on **February 16, 2004** at exactly 10:00 a.m. at the Dep. Ed. Division Office of Romblon with address at Brgy. Capaclan, Romblon, Romblon.
5. Bids shall be valid for a period of ninety (90) days after Bid opening and must be accompanied by a security in the amount of 2.5% of total bid price with a validity of 118 calendar days, and shall be delivered to the Division's Bids and Awards Committee, Department of Education - Division office of Romblon, Brgy. Capaclan, Romblon, Romblon on or before 10:00 A.M. **March 5, 2004**, at which time they will be opened in the presence of the bidders who wish to attend.

(Sgd.) **JOSE FREDDIE M. MOCON**
Assistants Schools Division Superintendent
Chairperson
Division Bids and Awards Committee

(PDI--Feb. 4, 2004)

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Don't grieve for me, for now I'm free
I'm following the path God laid for me.
I took His hand when I heard Him call,
I turned my back and left it all.

Col. Ismael G. Ranario, PAF (Ret.)

October 14, 1942 – January 31, 2004

His loving wife **Marilou**; children **Ian** and **Lisa**, **Ramil** and **Dayloe**, and **Mia**; grandchildren **JP**, **Joanna**, **Jun-Jun** and **Gaea**; mother-in-law **Ka Anching**; brothers and sisters **Narciso** and **Luz**, **Fe** and **Al**, **Israel** and **Flor**, **Samuel** and **Grace**, **Esperanza** and **Neno**; nephews and nieces, other relatives and friends request prayers for the eternal repose of his soul.

His body lies in state at the Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal Chapel, Fernando Air Base, Lipa City.

His interment will be on February 5, 2004 (Thursday), at the Floral Garden, Lipa City after the 10:00 a.m. Holy Mass.

Salome B. Vda. de Villaroman

(Nena Luming)

of Baliuag, Bulacan

Peacefully joined her Creator on February 2, 2004 at the age of 78.

Her bereaved children **Msgr. Manuel**, **Ma. Lourdes & Mar Catilo** and grandson **Gelo**; sister **Antonina** and brother **Valentin**; nephews, nieces and relatives request your prayers for the eternal repose of her soul.

Her remains lie in state at 241 Plaridel St., Baliuag, Bulacan.

Interment will be on Friday, February 6, 2004 at Gateway to Heaven Memorial Park after the 2:00 p.m. Concelebrated Mass (St. Augustine Parish)

ALFONSO EUGENIO CUNANAN

peacefully joined our Lord on January 27, 2004.

His loving wife **Myrna**; children **Aries**, **Sol & Mello**; parents **Reynato & Milagros**; siblings **Boy & Josie**; **Mia & Niña**; **Chris & Tess**; **Eddie & Josie**; **Delia & Anne**; **Jojo & Ruel**; **Cynthia & Bing**; relatives & friends request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

His remains lie in state at the Knights of Columbus Headquarters, Burgos Avenue, Cabanatuan City.

Interment will be on Thursday, Feb. 5, 2004 at the San Isidro Cemetery, San Isidro, Nueva Ecija after the 9AM Mass at the St. Nicholas Cathedral, Del Pilar St., Cabanatuan City.

An obituary with a picture can be a fitting tribute to your departed loved one.
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OBITUARY REQUIREMENTS:
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❷ Any identification document (I.D.)
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Carmen Cepeda Vda. De Balao

Wife of the late **Gen. Eulogio Balao**

Peacefully passed away in the Grace of our Lord on February 2, 2004.

Her bereaved children **Din, Nita, Totoy, Monchi** (+) and **Nonette**; sons-in-law **Tony** and **Romulo**; daughters-in-law **Beth** and **Norah**; grandchildren and their spouses **Marilou, Sandra** (+), **Martin** and **Jenny, Muchi** (+), **Hubert, Alex** and **Joyce, Jojo** and **Gina, Mila, Oca** and **Marilou, Carmel, Michael, Karl, Raymond, Sandro** and **Baby Anne, Ron** and **Kristina, Gerald** and **Tonette, Kenneth** and **Pearl, Kate** and **Carmina**; great grandchildren **Nikki, Migo, Andrea, Liza Anne, Carlo, Amy, Mika, Rachel, Bianca Grace, Kara** and **Anton**; and siblings **Col. Emmanuel Cepeda** (+) and **Concepcion Castillo** (+) request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of her soul.

Her remains lie in state at the Santuario De San Jose Parish, Greenhills.

Interment will be on February 7, 2004 at the Balao Family Museum, Manila Memorial Park, Parañaque.

ZOSIMO M. DYCHIOCO

Chief of Police Pampanga Center
Acting Chief of Police Angeles City

Died in the Grace of our Lord on February 3, 2004 at the age of 81.

His loving wife **Magdalena Santos Dychioco** (†), children **Brenda, Daniel, Elizabeth, Theresa, Juliana Marie, Edwin, Stella** and **Maritess**, grandchildren **Johanna, Christian, Joseph, Charan Daniel, Abigail, Classina, Tyler** and **Lauren** request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

His remains lie in state at the House of Many Mansions Memorial Chapels, Mac Arthur Highway, Pulung Bulu, Angeles City.

Interment will be on February 5, 2004 at La Pieta Memorial Park, Mac Arthur Highway, Angeles City after the 10:00 a.m. Mass at Holy Rosary Parish Church, Angeles City.

SM CINEMA

SM Dial-A-Movie 833-9999

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9295452

1 STUCK ON YOU
2 BROTHER BEAR
3 MONA LISA SMILE
4 A TALE OF TWO SISTERS
5 IN THE CUT
6 SHIRI
7 TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE
8 LAST SAMURAI

SM CITY CEBU
2313876

1 KING OF MASK
2 SHIRI
3 BROTHER BEAR
4 INTOLERABLE CRUELTY
5 TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE
6 HAUNTED OFFICE
7 LOST ISLAND
8 LAST SAMURAI

SM CITY BACOOR
4173668

1 KILL BILL VOLUME 1
2 LOTR: RETURN OF THE KING
3 LAST SAMURAI
4 SHIRI
5 TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE
6 BROTHER BEAR
7 MONA LISA SMILE
8 A TALE OF TWO SISTERS

SM CITY PAMPANGA
7120016

1 TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE
2 LAST SAMURAI
3 HAUNTED OFFICE
4 PURI
5 DIABLO
6 MONA LISA SMILE

SM SUPER CTR. SUCAT
8294975

1 SHIRI
2 TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE
3 IN THE CUT
4 LAST SAMURAI

SM BICUTAN
7763055

1 LAST SAMURAI
2 TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE
3 MONA LISA SMILE
4 SHIRI

SM CITY MARILAO

1 LAST SAMURAI
2 SHIRI
3 THE GATHERING
4 TWINS EFFECT

SM STA. MESA
7149322 • 7151416

1 KILL BILL VOLUME 1
2 IN THE CUT
3 TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE
4 STUCK ON YOU
5 LAST SAMURAI
6 A TALE OF TWO SISTERS
7 BROTHER BEAR
8 SHIRI
9 MONA LISA SMILE
10 LOTR: RETURN OF THE KING

SM SOUTHMALL
8006008

1 SHIRI
2 BROTHER BEAR
3 TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE
4 MONA LISA SMILE
5 KILL BILL VOLUME 1
6 LOTR: RETURN OF THE KING
7 A TALE OF TWO SISTERS
8 LAST SAMURAI
9 STUCK ON YOU
10 IN THE CUT

SM CITY FAIRVIEW
9350749

1 STUCK ON YOU
2 LOTR: RETURN OF THE KING
3 KILL BILL VOLUME 1
4 LAST SAMURAI
5 IN THE CUT
6 SHIRI
7 TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE
8 BROTHER BEAR
9 MONA LISA SMILE
10 TWINS EFFECT
11 PURI
12 A TALE OF TWO SISTERS

SM CITY DAVAO
2974698

1 TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE
2 LAST SAMURAI
3 SKY OF LOVE
4 LOST ISLAND
5 BROTHER BEAR
6 SHIRI

SM CITY LUCENA
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1 SHIRI
2 TWINS EFFECT
3 STUCK ON YOU
4 CABIN FEVER

SM MEGAMALL
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1 KILL BILL VOLUME 1
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2 MONA LISA SMILE
3 SHIRI
4 TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE
5 BROTHER BEAR
6 IN THE CUT
7 A TALE OF TWO SISTERS
8 LOTR: RETURN OF THE KING
9 STUCK ON YOU
10 LAST SAMURAI
11 TWINS EFFECT
12 DIABLO

SM CINEMA TUTUBAN
2514300

1 LAST SAMURAI
2 TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE
3 SHIRI
4 LOLLIPOP

SM CITY ILOILO
3209422

1 PURI
2 RESERVED
3 LAST SAMURAI
4 TWINS EFFECT
5 KILL BILL VOLUME 1
6 SHIRI
7 RESERVED
8 SKY OF LOVE

SM CITY MANILA
5230240

1 TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE
2 MONA LISA SMILE
3 IN THE CUT
4 LAST SAMURAI
5 BROTHER BEAR
6 LOTR: RETURN OF THE KING
7 SHIRI
8 TWINS EFFECT
9 A TALE OF TWO SISTERS
10 HAUNTED OFFICE
11 STUCK ON YOU
12 KILL BILL VOLUME 1

SM CITY CAGAYAN DE ORO
(088) 8592644

1 LAST SAMURAI
2 THE GATHERING
3 SUSPECT
4 KILL BILL VOLUME 1

SM CITY BAGUIO
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1 LAST SAMURAI
2 INTOLERABLE CRUELTY
3 SHIRI
4 BROTHER BEAR

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1 MONA LISA SMILE
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5 STUCK ON YOU DOLBY
6 IN THE CUT SDDS
7 THE TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE DTS

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2 IN THE CUT SDDS
3 MONA LISA SMILE DOLBY
4 STUCK ON YOU DOLBY DIGITAL
5 A TALE OF TWO SISTERS DOLBY DIGITAL
6 THE LORD OF THE RINGS: THE RETURN OF THE KING
7 BROTHER BEAR DTS
8 THE TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE

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1 THE LAST SAMURAI DOLBY DIGITAL
2 A TALE OF TWO SISTERS DOLBY
3 STUCK ON YOU DOLBY
4 THE TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE DOLBY
5 MONA LISA SMILE DOLBY
6 IN THE CUT DOLBY
7 LORD OF THE RINGS: THE RETURN OF THE KING DOLBY
8 BROTHER BEAR DOLBY

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2 TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE
3 THE LAST SAMURAI
4 MONA LISA SMILE

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1 TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE
2 MONA LISA SMILE
3 BROTHER BEAR
4 THE LAST SAMURAI

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1 MONA LISA SMILE
2 THE TWINS EFFECT
3 PURI
4 DIABLO
5 THE LAST SAMURAI

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1 THE LAST SAMURAI
2 BROTHER BEAR
3 PURI
4 A TALE OF TWO SISTERS
5 THE TWINS EFFECT

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1 PURI
2 THE LAST SAMURAI
3 THE TWINS EFFECT
4 STUCK ON YOU
5 BROTHER BEAR

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3 PURI
4 DIABLO
5 HAUNTED OFFICE
6 THE LAST SAMURAI

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1 TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE
2 THE LAST SAMURAI
3 STUCK ON YOU
4 MONA LISA SMILE DTS
5 IN THE CUT
6 A TALE OF TWO SISTERS

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1 THE LAST SAMURAI
2 KILL BILL
3 MYSTIC RIVER
4 BRIDAL SHOWER
5 LOTR: RETURN OF THE KING
6 MEMENTO MORI

ILOILO
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1 INTOLERABLE CRUELTY
2 SKY OF LOVE
3 THE LAST SAMURAI
4 KILL BILL
5 PURI
6 THE TWINS EFFECT

Stuck on You
mona lisa smile
LAST SAMURAI

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ALI MALL CINEPLEX 7

Ali 1	THE TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE
Ali 2	LOTR: RETURN OF THE KING
Ali 3	MONA LISA SMILE
Ali 4	IN THE CUT
Ali 5	LAST SAMURAI
Ali 6	STUCK ON YOU
Ali 7	KILL BILL

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FEB 18	NCA 7-COCK DERBY
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ODEON-2	BUKID AY BASA / KASIBULAN
ROBEN	BOLD STAR
TANDEM-1	SUGAT
TANDEM-2	KATAWAN MO LANGIT KO
TIMES	SPY / LEGEND OF CROCODILE

QUEZON CITY

ACT-1	SENSUAL ISLAND
ACT-2	KAYA KO PERO MASAKIT
ACT-3	ORIGINAL SIN
ACT-4	HANGGANG KAILAN KA PAPATAY
CORONET A	BAKAT / DOUBLE SEDUCTION
CORONET B	A MAN APART
QUEZON-1	BERTUD NG PUTIK
REMAR	X-MEN 2
REMAR-2	BOLD STAR

NOVA MALL - NOVALICHES CINEMA

A	SEX SCANDAL
B	LORD OF THE RINGS
C	

MANDALUYONG CITY

SHANGRI-LA PLAZA MALL	635-20-79 / 633-78-51 TO 70
CINEMA-1	CLOSED FOR RENOVATION
CINEMA-2	CLOSED FOR RENOVATION

CAINTA RIZAL

STA. LUCIA EAST	(681-5401 TO 19)
CINEMA-1	KILL BILL
CINEMA-2	PURI
CINEMA-3	MALIKMATA
CINEMA-4 (DOLBY DIGITAL)	LAST SAMURAI
CINEMA-5 (DTS)	CAPTAIN BARBELL
CINEMA-6	MALIKMATA
CINEMA-7	MEMENTO MORI
CINEMA-8	TWINS EFFECT
CINEMA-9 (DTS)	LAST SAMURAI
CINEMA-10 (DOLBY DIGITAL)	BROTHER BEAR
CINEMA-11 (SDDS)	STUCK ON YOU
CINEMA-12	LOTR 3: RETURN OF THE KING
CINEMA-14	A TALE OF TWO SISTERS
CINEMA-15	DIABLO

LORES

CINEMA-2	SENSUAL ISLAND
CINEMA-3	KAYA KO PERO MASAKIT

NE CINEMAGIC - CABANATUAN

(LAS PIÑAS)	LORD OF THE RINGS 3
CINEMA-1	KILL BILL
CINEMA-2	BANGKOK HAUNTED
CINEMA-4	CABIN FEVER

UNIWIDE COASTAL MALL

(PARANAQUE)	SENSUAL ISLAND
CINEMA-1	KAYA KO PERO MASAKIT
CINEMA-2	MEN IN BLACK II
CINEMA-4	SELDA

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3 IN THE CUT	GUARANTEED SEATS THX 3 THE LAST SAMURAI 1:00 4:10 7:20 10:30	Onstage REPERTORY'S FAME Feb. 7, 8, 14, 15, 21, 22, 28, 29, Mar. 6 & 7	GUARANTEED SEATS 3 SEABISCUIT 2:00 4:50 7:40 10:30	3 TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE
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OPENS TODAY

BUSINESS

Treasury may cancel auction of T-bills

By Clarissa S. Batino

THE BUREAU of Treasury yesterday said it might cancel the auction of regular treasury bonds and, instead, focus on selling 10- and 20-year bonds in the first quarter if the market would continue pushing interest rates up.

Deputy Treasurer Mina Figueroa said the government might also consider other fund-raising alternatives like offering retail treasury bonds, as strong pressure from the market kept pushing up the yields on regular treasury bills.

"If the market continues to remain volatile while we know that it is still very liquid, we will consider our options," she said. Rates of three-month, six-month and one-year treasuries went up last Monday.

The cost of five-year funds went up by 8.7 basis points to an average of 10.87 percent, from 10.783 percent a month ago.

To cap the increase in yields, the Treasury-led auction committee rejected high bids and accepted only P2.74 billion worth of bids, although the bonds for sale amounted to P4.5 billion.

Offers reached P9.197 billion, indicating that the market continued to hold huge amounts of cash but wanted higher returns for the funds it would lend to the government.

The bulk of the bids was at 11 percent, according to Figueroa. The secondary market was averaging at about 11.06 percent.

"Because of the political uncertainties, we know that the first half would be difficult. However, we will not allow a drastic increase in rates. We can reject offers or resort to other debt instruments that we think will be more attractive to the market like long-term bonds," said the deputy treasurer.

Figueroa said the Treasury could scrap the auction of any of the 2,3,4,5 and 7-year bonds.

"We can sell only 10s and 20s in the first quarter. There is demand for long term debt papers particularly among insurance firms," she said.

The treasury official knew that the market was still liquid but that political jitters had been giving banks a reason to bid up the rates.

"We only accepted the rates aligned to the secondary market on 5-year bonds. We have to reject the rest. The political uncertainty is causing volatility in the market," she noted.

As the peso remained volatile, Figueroa said the financial market was anticipating that the central bank would raise overnight rates or the reserve requirement to buoy the local currency.

If that happens, the market will have more reason to demand higher yields on local bonds.

"The market has been anticipating a BSP action, so it has been pushing the rates up," said the deputy treasurer. The central bank's overnight rates are at 6.75 percent for borrowing and 9 percent for lending. Banks' reserve requirement remains at 17 percent.

Swiss firm set to pursue case vs RP in local court

SWISS pre-shipment import inspector Societe Generale de Surveillance yesterday warned that it would bring back to the World Bank's International Center for Settlement of Investment Disputes the case against the Philippines if it could not find immediate relief in local courts.

SGS, in a statement from Geneva, also said that it was still willing to negotiate with the Philippine government to resolve the issue involving the country's obligations as soon as possible.

"SGS will pursue its efforts until full payment by the (Philippine) government of the outstanding amount (CHF 202.4 million plus accrued interests) has been made. It remains open to enter into a bona fide negotiation with the government of the Philippines to resolve the matter as quickly as possible and in a manner which is fair and equitable to all parties concerned," said the Swiss firm.

"Nonetheless, SGS is ready to pursue this matter in Philippine courts and it reserves the right to revert to the ICSID arbitral tribunal in the event that an expeditious solution to this matter is not found."

Last Jan. 29, the World Bank arbitration court upheld the position of the government that SGS's claim against the Philippines should be handled by local courts.

"Until the amount is either agreed or adjudicated, the arbitral tribunal has suspended the proceedings. The tribunal has requested that it be updated by the parties every six months on the progress of this determination. It has also retained the right to resume the proceedings upon request by either party for sufficient cause," SGS said in the statement.

SGS filed a case against the Philippines with the Washington-based arbitration court on April 2002, as the latter failed to settle P6.05 billion in obligations for services rendered from 1998 to March 2000. *Clarissa S. Batino*

THE GOVERNMENT economic team led by (from left) Trade and Industry Secretary Cesar V. Purisima, Finance Secretary Juanita D. Amatong and Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas Deputy Governor Amado M. Tetangco present to the business and financial communities the country's 2003 economic performance during a briefing in Makati. The economic team says the economy managed to grow despite a very difficult year marked by the SARS outbreak, the war in Iraq, terrorist activities and failed mutiny.

ROGER MARGALLO

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DTI proposes development of RP as health-care hub

By Michelle V. Remo

THE DEPARTMENT of Trade and Industry is reiterating its proposal to develop the country as a health-care hub in Asia, with the Europeans as its primary target market.

In a recent meeting with European Commissioner Pascal Lamy, Trade and Industry Secretary Cesar Purisima asked the EU chief to help Philippine hospitals get accreditation from EU's socialized health-care system.

Under the proposal, incentives will be given to European patients sent to the Philippines for treatment.

Purisima said he had raised the proposal to Lamy during the Asean Economic Ministers Meeting held in Jogjakarta, Indonesia last month. "He (Lamy) was supportive of the idea," said Purisima.

The country's trade chief said the proposal should be welcomed by the EU because the plan was expected to help address the latter's problem on the increasing cost of health-care for its constituents. The EU is currently faced with an aging population who avail themselves of medical claims and the lowering number of young people who pay health-care premiums.

He said the apparent solution to the problem is to reduce the cost of medical treatment, such as tapping foreign hospitals that charge lower medical treatment fees.

Purisima explained that it would cost the EU much less to send sick Europeans to the Philippines than let them get treatment at home. A bypass heart operation, he cited, only costs $20,000 in the Philippines compared with over $100,000 charged by hospitals in the EU.

"This means even if you include the cost of plane fare, medical treatment in the Philippines will still cost much less than the cost in Europe," said Purisima.

In line with this proposal, Purisima said the DTI was pushing for the ratification of a bill that would exempt firms such as hospitals from the payment of duty on imported equipment. Lowering the cost of medical equipment, said Purisima, would in turn reduce the cost of medical treatment here.

The bill on duty-free importation of capital equipment was recently passed by Congress and is pending at the Senate.

The proposal of developing the country as a health-care hub in the region was first raised by former Trade and Industry Secretary Manuel Roxas II. Roxas earlier said the DTI supported plans to provide discounts on health services to make the country a preferred site for medical treatment.

Danding says he is not part of ABC network acquisition

BUSINESSMAN Eduardo M. Cojuangco Jr. said he was not part of the consortium that acquired Associated Broadcasting Co. and that he did not invest any amount in the purchase.

"I have no investment whatsoever in the acquisition," Cojuangco said, adding that he does not belong to any holding firm that is now among the companies controlling ABC-5.

Cojuangco issued the statement in reaction to reports that he had joined the consortium led by Antonio "Tonyboy" Cojuangco as a silent partner in ABC.

The report quoted sources as saying that the elder Cojuangco, who chairs food and beverage giant San Miguel Corp., was a part of a triumvirate that was providing the financial muscle to ABC-5.

ABC-5 is still in the process of raising capital to arm the network in competing with giants ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp. and GMA Network Inc.

There are three holding companies that now control ABC-5, a source said.

The other investing group, aside from Tonyboy, is a holding company called DM Archers whose beneficial owner is banker Raul de Mesa, president of Bank of Commerce where the former is likewise the single biggest shareholder.

DM Archers, which was incorporated as a holding company for De Mesa's personal investment in ABC-5, owns 32 percent of the consortium, the source noted.

The remaining 68 percent is owned by the Cojuangcos, other sources added.

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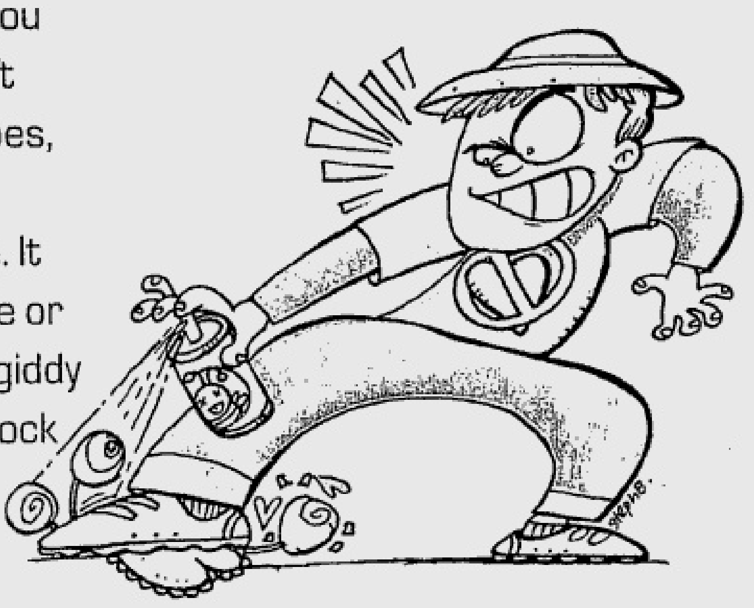
Editor **Chelo Banal-Formoso**
Chief of Correspondents **Pam Pastor**

Are you ready for Cupid?

It's 10 days to Valentine's Day. Are you ready for it? Do not fret. We have gift suggestions, date ideas, sweet recipes, movies to see, concerts to go to, gimmicks for the dateless and more. It doesn't matter whether you're single or attached, loaded or cash-strapped, giddy with excitement or searching for a rock to hide under. This is your guide to surviving February 14



Your Valentine's Day battle plan

By Pam Pastor

IT doesn't matter if your relationship is on its nth year or still in infancy. You know that you need a battle plan when Feb. 14 hits.

Keep the guns and the canons. You only need two things for survival—the two Cs—cash and creativity. And if you're lacking either of the two, you can make up for it with the other.

Consider this your crib sheet.

What to give

If you've got cash:

The sad thing about such a commercialized occasion is that most people get duped into buying mass-produced Valentine souvenirs. Forget the heart-shaped pillows and the angel figurines. This year, make this your mantra: nothing generic, nothing generic.

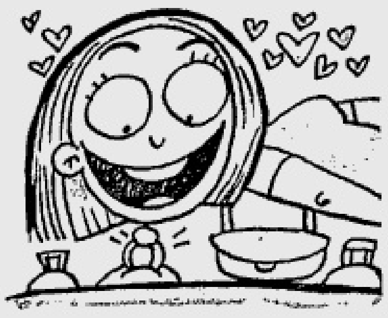
Sure, it's easy to just waltz into a store, snap up their gift suggestions and shell out the cash, but your significant other would definitely appreciate something more personal and personalized.

Try to remember the last time you went to the mall. Did your significant other drool over anything in particular? Maybe those new Golas, the new No Doubt CD or that Adidas bag.

Recall conversations, you might suddenly be inspired. Was there a book that he or she really loved that someone borrowed and never returned? Are his basketball shoes worn out? Did he just rip his favorite shirt?

If your loved one is Net-savvy, try to check the Amazon.com wishlists. That should give you a clue.

A few other tips: Buy something they wouldn't buy for themselves and think, think, think.



We don't believe this day should cause you stress

aAWOOOOOoo

If you're broke:

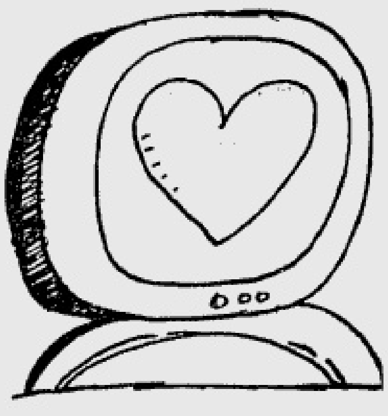
If you don't have the moolah to buy presents, make them.

Here are some ideas:

The soundtrack of your romance. Make a CD of all the songs that are significant to your relationship. Your song for your loved one, your loved one's song for you, the song playing when you first kissed, the song that you first sang for him or her. You know how it goes.

Create a CD sleeve, complete with pictures and sweet little notes. If you don't have a CD burner, ask a friend with one to help you.

Write a song and record it. If you think no song ever written is enough to speak of the love you have for your significant other, write your own and give him or her a copy.



Go techie. Tell the whole Internet community about your love. All you need is an Internet account and a dose of imagination. Sites like Geocities.com offer free web space and web hosting. Brush up on your HTML skills by visiting lycos.hotwired.com/webmonkey/teachingtool. Visit iloveskatie.com for inspiration.

Make a photo essay. Express how you feel about your loved one with images.

Coupons. You can never go wrong with these. Make coupons for back rubs, kisses, hugs, dates, hand massages, home-cooked meals and make sure your services are ready when your loved one tries to redeem them.

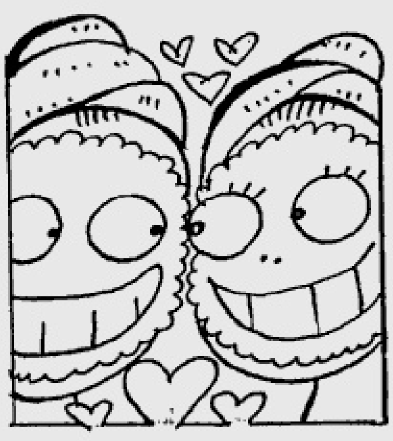
Make a bulletin board. Buy a corkboard from your favorite bookstore and use it as your canvas. Tack up photos, notes, movie stubs, bus passes, receipts and other mementos. Your loved one can keep your gift in his or her room.

Make a jar of joy. If you don't have a nice jar lying around at home, you can buy nice inexpensive ones from the glassware sections of most department stores. Fill the jar with your loved one's favorite things. You can make a jar of edible or inedible goodies. For your girl, you can fill the jar with little hair accessories, trinkets and beads. Your guy might enjoy basketball cards, gum, movie tickets and Level-up cards.

Use these suggestions alone or in combinations.

Where to go and what to do

If you've got cash:



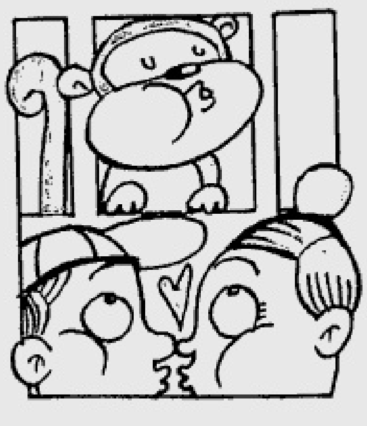
Enjoy a night of good music. There are a lot of concerts to choose from. There's Patti Austin and James Ingram, Boyz II Men and Brian McKnight, Toto, etc. Check the entertainment guides for ticket information.

Go out of town. It's one good way to get away from the Manila traffic on the 14th.

Pamper yourself. Go for his-and-hers spa treatments. There are countless spas in the metropolis—just make sure you remember to call ahead of time to ensure that there's a spot for you.

Return to significant places. Like where you went for your first date or where you had your first kiss. Again, remember to make reservations because these places are bound to be packed next Saturday.

YOUR VALENTINE'S/ C3



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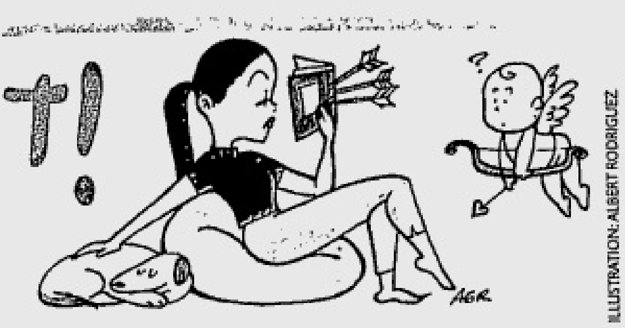
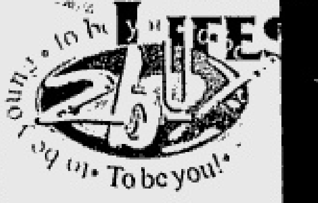


ILLUSTRATION: ALBERT RODRIGUEZ


2bU!
To be you!

By Vanessa Arellano Doctor
2bU! Correspondent

A FEW more days to Valentine's and everyone is in a frenzy finding that perfect gift, making advance reservations to the most posh, most romantic of restaurants, planning every minute of the day's events, much to the glee of retailers seeing their flower, candy and toy sales shoot up faster than the most high-tech of rockets.

What can I say? Romance is definitely humidifying the air.

Ah, but wait! There are some of us who are not starry-eyed! Yes, friends. Most people, a lot, actually, are single. If you're already spoken for, don't frown just yet. A lot of singles out there would definitely be willing to trade an arm and a leg to go stag on V-Day and prove to all you eyebrow-raisers that it isn't really Judgment Day.

In fact, most see it as an initiation into a spectacular ball game apart from the usual mush. And, really, who among us genuinely want to just blend in on such a day? Isn't it way better to stand out?

Is being alone on Valentine's Day really such a curse? Here are some of the popular myths on the dateless.

Dateless=Lonely =Bitter

Don't you just want to whack that person who tells you, "Oh, no date? What's wrong?" then pats your shoulder consolingly?

I remember when I was still single and I'd decide to curl up in bed with a really good book, instead of saying "yes" to that guy next door who has been hounding me for a date since Ramos was president. People would unwittingly shake their heads and immediately assume I was too much of a loner, a born loser, to celebrate love on such a wonderful (I'd say, overrated) day.

Being single on Valentine's is as much a choice as being in a relationship is a "gift." Some do believe that it's best to channel all their energies to something more productive, instead of worrying about dates. There are also others who would rather not get into the whole courtship-relationship shebang just yet. Lonely does not come anywhere near the picture. Besides, it's not like dating and showing someone you love him/her is reserved only for Valentine's Day.

There's something wrong with you

There isn't. There never was. I don't need to get all Deepak Chopra on you on this one. Valentine's Day is not a reminder of one's self-worth and desirability. It was merely a pseudo-holiday created by some hero-for-lovers wannabe eons ago. Most singles share the opinion (and even I do!) that being attached is not an assurance of an eternity in bliss. Like I said, it's a choice and all of us are entitled to our own.

What makes it a crime, however, is forcing oneself to go on a date with the person you don't really fancy just because it's V-Day. That's just wrong.

Singles ought to stay home on Valentine's Day

Did we just miss a presidential declaration? What's this? Exclusive-ville? Most singles claim that it's better to fly and party solo on V-Day. And, mind you, the Singles bashes are so much better on this day and people actually have more fun bumping into the fellow dateless and flirting like mad, much to the regret of the partnered who have no way of joining in the fun.

I know someone who went out with single friends on V-Day and ended up enjoying the night better compared to the past Valentines he spent with dates. Who wants to be placed under pressure anyway, when you can get sloshed out with your fellow single friends and laugh your way home?

Karma

Hey, just because you bailed on someone who had the hots for you before, doesn't mean you're being punished. While the evil things one does in the past sometimes do come back tenfold (if you believe in it, that is), being single on Valentine's Day, or a series of such days, does not imply that a person has been horrible at romance years back. Hey, things happen. And if a relationship, doesn't work out, then leave it be. Karma has nothing to do with it. Anyone who believes it does is mental.

The list of such singles Valentine's urban legends can go on to infinity. The bottom line is, the day when most everybody thinks it's a crime to be uncoupled turns out to be one of the most happening party events of the year! Singlehood is not a sin, nor is it a pitiful state. What it is, is a celebration of the self amid a mass of people celebrating, not the occurrence of a date, but the existence of love. And love, contentment, happiness and a freaking good time come from within, not from other people.

E-mail the author at ness_doctor@yahoo.com

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DATELESS AND DIVINE

10 great things about flying solo on V-Day

1. YOU don't need to spend money for gifts or meals and get all decked up to impress someone. In fact, you get to keep all your money to pamper yourself and have a rocking good time with buddies who are singles, too, and not feel a tad bit guilty about it.

2. No pre-date jitters. No awkward moments. No pressure to say "I love you," or, give "it" up. (The last part, I have to say, is just really pathetic.)

3. You don't have to envy someone who's got better (or better-looking) dates, boyfriends, girlfriends than yours.

4. You don't have to feel bad about secretly lining up at the return/exchange section of the mall the next day because your date thought it was cute to give you a stuffed bunny wearing a locket with both your pictures in it, simulating what you'd be 10 years from now. You also don't have to fake your reaction when you get that "lovely" surprise.

Can I have your number?
AGR

ILLUSTRATION: ALBERT RODRIGUEZ

5. Freedom from the horrible traffic anticipated. Not only is it a weekend, but almost all couples in this planet will be pulling each other's hair to get to the best seats, the ideal parking slots, the best spot to view the sunset, etc.

6. You and your single friends can make fun of people lining up at motels and those who bought outfits just for that occasion.

7. You don't have to worry about getting fat with all the chocolates you receive, or where to put the flowers, which are going to wilt in three days anyway. You also need not get all fired up being poetic and mushy on cards.

8. You can have more than one date because you're not chained to someone else. Go ahead, indulge yourself.

9. It's better to be with a good book or a good TV show, than with a lousy date.

10. More family time. When was the last time you went out on a date with your mom and dad? Now's the time to catch up!

Hooray for self-love

Singles on V-Day:

There are three kinds of love—filia, eros, agape. V-Day is an embarrassing commercialization and unseemly emphasis on eros. No wonder the streets near motels are strewn with condoms and people get venereal disease. Hahahaha! —**Resty Odon**

Stay at home armed with DVDs to last you three days and food to last you five. Friends are optional but it's best to have some. Stay away from chick flicks if you're emotional about the fact that you're single, or treat yourself to a day of pampering. Go to a spa for the whole body blast. If the budget's tight, stay home with do-it-yourself ingredients (check out Cory Quirino's book for tips) and lots of votive candles. —**Deverar**

Go to a film festival or the nearest rock concert with friends. Or go scuba or skydiving. —**Ailene**

Go to the UP fair, as it conveniently falls on Valentine's Day. You can also spend the day alone and watch movies at home. It's actually pretty fulfilling in a weird way. —**Anna Gan**

Throw a party! Invite couples and singles...

10 GREAT C2

Take the sweet way to your partne

By Catherine Young
2bU! Correspondent

VALENTINE'S Day, like most holidays, is a time when diets are forgotten. It is the time when sales of sweets soar or when people try their hand at whipping up something for their sweet.

Here are some goodies you can make for your sweet to make Feb. 14 even more special:

Marshmallow Brownies

½ c margarine
½ cocoa
1 c sugar
1 large egg
½ c all-purpose flour
¼ c evaporated or fresh milk
¼ tsp vanilla oil
medium-sized colored marshmallows

Melt the margarine and mix in the cocoa. Afterwards, mix all the other ingredients together. Bake at 350 °F for 25-30 minutes. After removing it from the oven, pour about 100 grams of marshmallows. Wait until the marshmallows are slightly melted so they will stick to the brownies. Drizzle melted chocolate. Cool the brownies in the fridge before slicing. Makes about 16 pieces.

Chocolate Grahams Tiramisu

18 pcs M.Y. San chocolate graham crackers
½ c confectioners' sugar
2 tbsp sugar
225 g Magnolia Cream Cheese
½ c coffee mixture (1 tsp coffee + 2 tsp sugar + ½ c water)
1 box chilled all-purpose cream
2 tbsp cocoa powder

To make the filling, mix the cheese and the confectioner's sugar in a bowl until light and fluffy.

In another bowl, whip the all-purpose cream until its volume is doubled. Blend the two mixtures together.

To make the graham cracker layers, combine the coffee mixture and the sugar together until complete dissolved. Dip the chocolate graham crackers in the mixture. Don't worry if they break apart.

To assemble the tiramisu, lay 6 pieces of the soaked crackers in a deep serving dish. Spread ½ of the cream mixture evenly. Make two more layers using the crackers and the filling. Finally, garnish the top with cocoa powder and chill in the fridge. This makes about 8 slices.

Turtle Pie

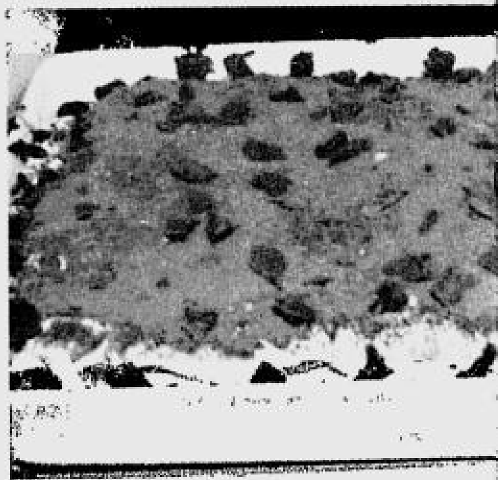
12 oz caramel candies
½ c heavy cream
three 9-inch deep dish pie shells, baked
4 ½ oz pecan pieces
1 ½ quarts milk
10 ½ oz granulated sugar
3 whole eggs
6 egg yolks
3 ¾ oz cornstarch
3 oz butter
1 ½ tbsp vanilla extract
21 oz semi-sweet chocolate chips
sweetened whipped cream and toasted pecan hal

Melt the caramels boiler and stir until mixture into the bo Sprinkle 1½ ounces caramel mixture and

Meanwhile, comb ounces sugar in a sau arate bowl, beat the and remaining sugar into the egg mixture

Return the combi and heat until boiling from the heat and st and chocolate. Pour 3 to each pie shell. Re set, and cut each int serving with whipp halves.

If you have extra



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SINGLES NEED NOT BE MISERABLE

By Angela V. Ignacio
2bU! Correspondent

OKAY, so it's V-Day yet again and you still don't have a special someone. Big deal. It might be the day of hearts and roses, but who says only couples can have fun? You and your other single (and maybe equally bitter) friends don't have to resort to moping around and watching mushy-gushy movies until your tear ducts dry up. Lose the junk food, ditch those rented videos and put away your sleeping bags—it's time to go on a real date with those you care about. Two may be company, but three or more will never be a crowd. At least, not in this case.

Sing each other's blues away

If your friends are the type of people who prefer to wallow in their own tub of self-pity, drag them to the nearest KTV bar and beat the depression out of them with a feisty song or two. Leave your timidity at the door and hold a contest to see who knows the most *baduy* songs ever written, or do a group *harana* on a friend who's having a particularly melancholy day to let him or her know the meaning of being loved. It's a surefire way to cheer everyone up… especially if none of you actually knows how to sing.

Table for two? Nah

Instead of blowing bucks on fancy restaurants, test your culinary skills and cook a gourmet dinner with your buds. The kitchen might look like a demolition area afterwards, but the cleanup is nothing compared to spending a (hopefully) sumptuous meal that you yourselves have prepared. Go out for coffee or drinks afterwards and just chill out, enjoying each other's company. If you're bored, you can always make fun of the lovey-dovey couples around you… Just kidding, of course.

Go out on a group date

You and your friends don't have to be each other's dates. You can meet up with an acquaintance and ask him or her to bring some friends—a mini-soiree, if you will. It's like a safety net of sorts; there is less pressure to like a particular guy or girl, and if you do, it's not because you're forced to. Then again, there's a big chance that you and your friends might end up getting attracted to the same person. Sounds juvenile, I know, but hey, you can't deny that this setup works most of the time. So what if sparks don't fly? At least you have new people to add to your Friendster list.

Singles parties! Yeah!

One of the greatest testimonials to the joys of being single comes in the form of awesome singles parties that fun-loving people throw just for this occasion. This is not the day for killjoys and party poopers; it's the perfect opportunity to meet new people, whether for prospects or just friends. If you're feeling mischievous, walk up to that cute guy or girl whom your shy friend has been eyeing and play the impromptu matchmaker. You'd be surprised at how many might-have-been-couples there are, just because they didn't have the guts to do the introducing themselves. Better yet, go make your own match. Love is in the air, after all.

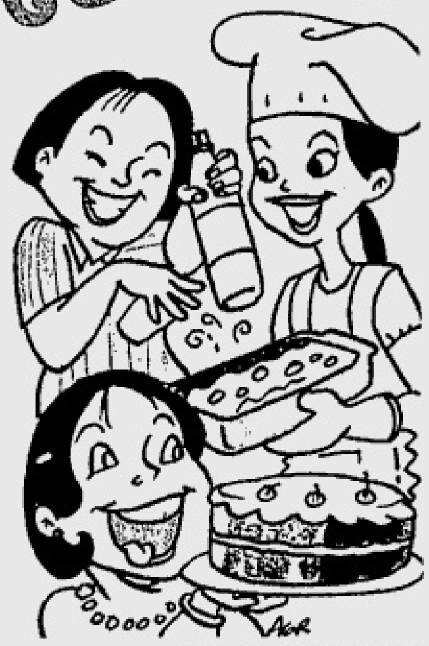

ILLUSTRATION. ALBERT RODRIGUEZ

Swoon with the crooners

Those who feel like splurging a little may go with their friends to a concert or two. There's never a shortage of great V-Day gigs to go to, especially now that more and more international acts are coming over. There's Michael Bublé, Boyz II Men and Brian McKnight, Keith Martin, Toto, James Ingram and Patti Austin, Jason Mraz, and not to mention our equally talented local acts. Buy out an entire row and swoon along with your starry-eyed friends. Never mind that you don't have someone to cuddle with; at least you can keep your attention onstage and actually enjoy the music.

If you can't beat 'em, join 'em

If you have tried all of these and you still end up feeling lonely, then by all means, jump in the dating bandwagon and spend a quiet evening with a nice guy or girl. If you're worried about your other single friends, then set them up on dates, too. Chances are, you and your friends will hit it off with your prospective dates quite well, and who knows? Maybe next year, you won't have to sulk or whine. Or read singles guides like this one.

E-mail the author at aoshi_no_miko@hotmail.com

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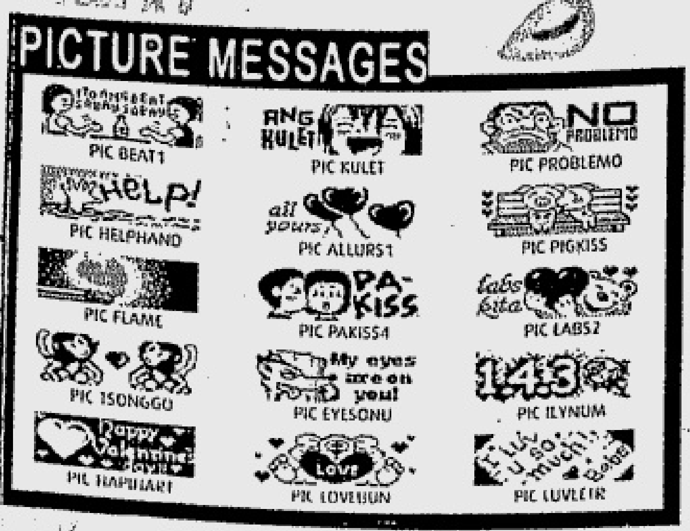

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heart

ves as garnish
vith cream in a double mooth. Pour ½ of this tom of each pie shell. pecan pieces over the et aside.
ne the milk and 5 ¼ epan. Simmer. In a sep- eggs, yolks, cornstarch Pour the milk mixture nd mix well.
ation to the saucepan and thickened. Remove r in the butter, vanilla cups of the mixture in- frigerate the pies until 8 slices. Garnish each ed cream and pecan
ime, melt some chocolate and use it as glaze before the garnish. Makes about 24 slices.

STRAWBERRY Cheesecake

Strawberry Cheesecake

1 ½ c graham cracker crumbs
2 tbsp sugar
3 tbsp melted butter
19 oz cream cheese
1 c sugar
2 tsp grated lemon peel
½ tsp vanilla
3 eggs
1 c mashed strawberries
1 c sugar
3 tbsp cornstarch
½ c water

Preheat the oven to 350 °F. To make the crust, mix together the graham cracker crumbs. Blend in the butter and press into a 9" pan. Bake for 10 minutes and cool. Reduce the oven temperature to 300 °F.

Beat the cream cheese in a large bowl and gradually add the sugar. Add lemon peel and vanilla. Beat in the eggs one at a time. Pour the mixture into the shell and bake for an hour until the center is firm. Cool to room temperature.

To make the glaze, blend the sugar and cornstarch together. Stir in water and mashed strawberries. Heat in a small saucepan while stirring constantly, until the mixture thickens and boils. Boil and stir for 1 minute. Cool and spread over the cheesecake. Chill for three hours.

References: www.razzledazzlerecipes.com and www.pastrywiz.com

E-mail the author at cathy_young1@yahoo.com

Your Valentine's Day battle plan

From page C1

If you're broke:

Stay home. No, I don't mean stay home and be miserable. Stay home and fix your place up. Transform it into a scene for romance. Prepare a home-cooked meal, pop in your favorite easy listening CD (or maybe the mix CD you made), rent a few romantic movies and enjoy the night with your loved one.

Window shop. Go to the mall and plot your future together. Visit the appliance centers, the furniture shops, the home sections and even the baby departments and pretend to be shopping for your own house. Do this only if you know it wouldn't scare away your loved one.

Blast from the past. Take the cue from "My Sassy Girl." Wear your old uniforms and revert to either your high school or college selves. Stop being uptight, be silly and have fun.

Pretend to be tourists. Take a break from jadedness and look at your world as if you were seeing it for the first time. You and your loved one can pretend to be visiting your own city for the first time. If you're in Manila, visit Luneta, the museums and Intramuros. Ride a *calesa* and take lots of pictures.

Play games. Monopoly, chess, Snakes and Ladders, even card games. You can even bet kisses.

Break a world record. Close-up's Lovapalooza event wouldn't be charging for entrance. Just register at closeupplanet.com and you get in for free. There will be lots of music, booths and rides and you can help beat the world record for most number of couples kissing simultaneously.

Extend, extend. Turn Valentine's Day into Valentine's Week by preparing a surprise for each day. Sure, this would take more time and effort, but it would definitely be appreciated.

E-mail the author at ppastor@inquirer.com.ph

10 great things about flying . . .

From page C1

guys to girl ratio must be 2:1. Hahaha!—**Yogi Pacquing**

Go on a trip alone. A friend once told me that a person needs to do this at least once in his/her life. I tried it and have never stopped doing it ever since. It's good communing with one's self every now and then.—**Angel Banaag**

Dinner with attached friends (particularly those who don't believe in Valentine's Day and put off dates on another day). Mass (God has been a constant V-day date for me). Shopping!—**Hazel Reside**

For girls: paint your nails or color your hair any way you like and thank God there isn't a critical boyfriend around to diss/cramp your style. For guys: wear any ratty old clothes you like and thank God you don't have a prissy girlfriend to throw away your favorite but hole-y shirt), or go shopping for bargains, because Valentine's sales will be on, and sappy lovestruck pairs will only have eyes for each other and not the bargains.—**Yagi Olaguera**

Go out with friends. Watch concerts, have dinner, then drink yourselves silly, or go on a long drive to Tagaytay or somewhere else. —**Arababyohyeah**

Singles need to go out together and have fun. There should be no room for self pity. —**Ariel Atienza**

Have fun and be thankful you won't be spending much. —**The Dark Horse**

List down 12 things to do for the whole year, one for each month, so that you'll have something to do on the next V-Day. —**Jonjon Alipio**

Vanessa Arellano Doctor

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2BU! SURVEY

Do you celebrate Valentine's Day?

"YES, *sa* SM.—Jaime, 21

"YES. Dinner, *nood* sine, and just being romantic and stuff."—Ciela, 19 and Jhem, 22

"NAH. I celebrate love every day.—Bianca, 20

"NO. Valentine's Day is just a tradition."—Aivan, 20

"YES, Coz I have a reason to."—Rochelle, 21

"NO. *Kung hindi ko* feel, I won't celebrate it."—Syd, 20

"NO. Just because."—Mike, 20

Text and photos by Zee Castro

VALENTINE'S Day is an excuse to be all mushy, *senti* and lovey-dovey. It's the time to buy that wickedly overpriced bouquet of roses and that yummy box of sweets, reserve a table at your favorite resto, request your favorite music station to play your theme song, and plan an utterly romantic evening.

But is this all an idealistic fantasy? Do couples still actually go out of their way to plan for the perfect lovefest?

Here are some of the answers we heard:

No. It's too commercialized. Besides it just gives the girls a reason to get mad if we forget to give flowers.—**Ben, 25**

Depends... *Pero* before, my mom would always wake us up with a little gift for Valentine's Day. So I guess, I do celebrate it and my mom was always my Valentine. Aww... I miss you mom!—**Victor, 22**

Yes. *Masarap kasi* na may special Day of Hearts, although *dapat araw-araw sariwain ang* love.—**Adz, 20**

Yes. *Wala lang!* It's a must for me and my boyfriend 'coz it's a special day.—**Diane, 20**

I celebrate and I enjoy Valentine's Day because it is a day to share love!—**Carl, 20**

No. It's nonsense. It's a waste of money and time. I'd rather hang around with my friends.—**Fred, 21**

Yes... *pero di ako nakikisabay*. Corny *'pag* exact date and crowded *yung* places.—**Joyce, 20**

I do celebrate Valentine's Day. It is another way of making a relationship stronger.—**Ad, 21**

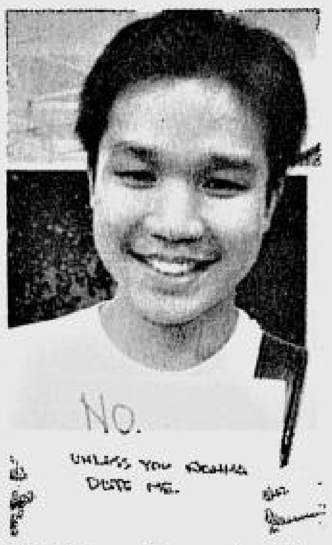
Once a year *lang naman yon dibah*? So, why not celebrate it?! Tsaka, *parang* license *mo na yon* to get mushy and corny with your special someone... At least for a day *man lang*.—**Liz, 20**

Yes, *parang Pasko yan eh*, to show your loved ones how much they mean to you. *Hindi lang yung girlfriend, pero lahat ng pamilya at kaibigan.*—**Tomas, 22**

Yes, because it feels so different when I give flowers, gifts and eat dinner with my girl on a romantic day.—**Marco,21**

No, I don't. It reminds me about the heartaches of my last relationship.—**Paolo,20**

"BLOODY NO! *Wala kasing magbibigay sakin ng* chocolates and flowers *eh*."—Anton, 21



"NO. Never. It's overrated. It's just a marketing ploy."—JM, 23

"YES. I spend Valentine's Day in the arcade with all the video-game chikababes, especially Cammy."—Romir, 22

"BEH. Too many dates eh."—Wynna, 20

What's your favorite V-day memory?

By Melissa Telan
2bU! Correspondent

WHAT makes a special Valentine's Day? A dozen red roses? A candlelit dinner at a fancy restaurant? Surprise concert tickets?

As Valentine's Day draws nearer, people in love are frantically scrambling for ideas on how to make their Valentine's Day more memorable than the last.

To help them out, 2bU! got ideas from some young people by asking them to share their favorite Valentine's Day memories.

ILLUSTRATION: ALBERT G. RODRIGUEZ

My boyfriend and I were in school when he suddenly asked to copy my notes. When I opened my notebook later, two tickets to Boyz II Men concert fell from it! He knew I loved surprises and he never fails me.—**Carla Rosario, 21, customer supervisor**

Meeting the girl of my dreams two Valentines ago at a dating game.—**Mike Gavino, 20, De La Salle University**

Valentine's Day three years ago, my crush accidentally burst a balloon that was given to me. So in order to make up for it, he went out to buy me a rose. He handed me the flower... then he told that me he liked me. *Haaay.*—**Ann Yu, 21, Ateneo de Manila University**

Can't say I have any. Maybe in a couple of centuries?—**Angela, turning 21, premed student**

When I gave all my close female blockmates a carnation. They were surprised I thought of them that day.—**Stagen, 23, DLSU-College of Saint Benilde, dancer**

For Valentine's Day, my boyfriend had a restaurant closed and went to hire a string quartet to play for us the whole night. He even played my favorite song using a violin as the finale. I knew he practiced so hard for it and it still makes my heart skip a beat whenever I remember it!—**Krista Ranillo, 20, Ateneo student/actress/prankster**

Getting to spend the whole day with the girl I'm crazy about.—**Rodney Uy, 20, University of San Carlos Cebu, Talamban Campus**

When the guy I liked whom I thought didn't like me gave me a rose during Valentine's Day, while we were on an outreach program. And the sweet thing was, all the kids knew about it! It was really a beautiful day.—**Sunset, 20, University of Asia and the Pacific**

V-day 2001, when my friends and I—three single girls—hang out in different restaurants the whole night observing those who were busy with their dates.—**Jen, 20, ADMU**

I went to my girlfriend's school and surprised her. It was quite amazing because I had to fool the guard into letting me in since boys weren't allowed in her school.—**Miguel, 17, La Salle Greenhills**

Every Valentine I had with my boyfriend was memorable but in 2001, he totally surprised me when he took me to the Freestyle Valentine concert when I thought that dinner at my favorite restaurant and flowers were romantic already! It was the very first concert I went to in my life.—**Grace Saria, 21, campus writer/model**

Puno lahat ng restaurants so *nag*-take out *kami sa* Burger King *at pagkatapos, nag*-"fine dining" picnic *sa* park *ng* village.—**Jason, 20, ADMU**

My favorite Valentine experience was when my boyfriend went to the place where I was tutoring little kids and surprised me with a bouquet of beautiful roses.—**Jane, 21, ADMU**

During the latter part of the evening Valentine's concert in school, my crush and I took off from our *barkada* and went to the secluded part of the soccer filed. While there, we shared some intimate stories, then one thing led to another and we soon found ourselves sharing a kiss. I'd have to say that this kiss was special because it was both our first. She later became my girlfriend.—**Daryl, 17, LSGH**

On Valentine's Day my first boyfriend and I watched "Titanic" together. Afterwards, we went to the UP grounds and hang out with his friends. He didn't give me a V-day gift, but just being with him was the ultimate Valentine treat.—**Lily Chu, 23, actor/singer/model/host**

When I watched the Boyz II Men concert last Valentine's with my girlfriend!—**Oli Ong, 20, bodybuilder**

When I received my first-ever large bouquet of roses.—**Mercedes Mapua, 20, Ateneo Celadon manager**

There was a concert in Araneta (Coliseum) and my then ex-girlfriend and I went to watch it. After the concert, I brought her home. Before leaving, she told me that I should be happy because she has agreed to be my girlfriend again. What an ultimate finish to an ultimate night!—**Tinoy, 17, LSGH**

E-mail the author at melissatelan@yahoo.com

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Vexed by V-Day

ILLUSTRATION: STEPH BRAVO

By Niño Mark M. Sablan
2bU! Correspondent

I BELIEVE in love, really. I'm a huge fan. But there's just something about Valentine's Day that makes me curl my lips in disgust.

Perhaps, it's the obvious fact that it's commercialized. Overly now. Some people believe that Valentine's Day is just a manufactured occasion thanks to flower shops, chocolate manufacturers and greeting card companies.

Although I'm not sure if it started out that way, I have to nod my head in agreement. And who could blame people for thinking such thoughts? On such an occasion when you should be expressing your love to others, you end up purchasing petals just like everybody else, wanting the most expensive chocolates or grabbing the nearest greeting card (instead of unleashing your inner poet).

Another reason why Valentine's Day isn't all that lovely to me is because other people make it hard for love to be expressed. The flowers that abound look and smell the same, for one. Do you really think the recipient will perform cartwheels and somersaults at this?

And those chocolates! Taking out money from one's wallet is such a sweatless task! Now if you're baking some raisin oatmeal cookies yourself, that's super special.

Special vehemence is reserved for those greeting card companies who assume that people can't express themselves. I don't care if so-and-so write "poetry." I can write "poetry," too. I know some people thank heavens for cards that say exactly how and what they feel, but if they were really looking for something to say exactly how they feel, why not just whip a pen and write exactly how or what it is that they feel. Exactly!

For dates, restaurants and movie houses get seriously packed during V-day. Is waiting interminably for a table or watching a movie while standing your idea of a romantic date on Feb. 14?

What irks me the most about Valentine's Day and the people who fall victim to it is how they limit their expressions of love only during that day.

How many sweet lovers suddenly become Mr. Freeze the day after V-day? How many significant others continue giving cards, chocolates and flowers even after Valentine's Day?

Hopeless cases

Having been sorrowfully single myself for a couple of Valentine's Days, I feel for the sad and single. Some aren't entirely suicidal and extremely sad, but society has its way of magnifying things. It has its own way of pointing the finger at the unattached ones and telling them that they're repulsive and hopeless cases.

> The cynic in me gets resurrected every time I see flowers or red heart cutouts cluttering display windows at this time of year

Which isn't entirely true, as the sad single ones know. It's just that V-day is such a couple-occasion, a pair day, that one's aloneness is highlighted more than ever. One's sadness too, if that's the case.

This is super sad, because V-day should be for everyone. I would like to think that originally, Valentine's Day was created for everyone. Of course, the story of St. Valentine exists and I'm just too ignorant to know about it.

Now there ought to be a new occasion meant for non-romantic love! This way, the rest of the population will have reason to be giddy and excited. I just hope the flower shops, chocolate manufacturers and greeting card companies will stay away. (That I greatly doubt, though.)

Valentine's Day is just around the corner and the cynic in me gets resurrected every time I see flowers or red heart cutouts cluttering display windows.

Deep within my heart, I believe and I know that V-day is for everybody—for the romantic couples all lovey-dovey with one another; for all the *manangs* selling those huge roses; for the hopeful, dreamy single; for that individual perpetually in love with love.

But I just hope that apart from love, everyone would have respect for all of us regardless of age, skin or gender. Then and only then can love bloom and V-day can be for everybody.

As for me, I'm pretty much attached this year so I suppose I've got to say goodbye to being cynical. Besides, I know how and when to express my love for the special people in my life—Valentine's Day or not.

E-mail the author at katotino@yahoo.com

Romancing the movies

Here are 10 great flicks to watch with your lovey-dovey this Season of Hearts

By Samantha Ang
2bU! Correspondent

SO it's Valentine's Day. What better way to spend it than to relax and watch a romance movie?

But instead of watching another rerun of "Titanic" or seeing another one of the Meg Ryan films on the big screen, here are some other exceptional choices that would surely get you in the mood this season.

10. **Walt Disney Classics**—Timeless tales of sleeping princesses, wicked villains, princes-in-disguise, love's first kiss, talking animals, singing kitchen wares... 'Nuff said.

9. **"The Wedding Singer"**— Sweet and funny: two words that best describe this romantic comedy. Adam Sandler is Robbie Hart, a wedding singer suffering the loss of a fiancée. Drew Barrymore plays Julia, a waitress who is engaged to the wrong guy. The two meet, fall in love, and before you know it, you'll be singing along to "All I wanna do is grow old with you..."

"GONE With the Wind"

8. **"Fools Rush In"**—A story about fate and taking chances set in Las Vegas. Matthew Perry and Salma Hayek has perfect chemistry on screen. This is really one movie that would make you go "aww..."

7. **"Got to Believe"**—This charming local film revolves around a wedding planner, played by Claudine Baretto, who feels like she's in a rat race to get herself un-single quick. Rico Yan plays her best friend who tries to set her up with different people. But what if true love is actually nearer than they think?

6. **"A Walk in the Clouds"**—After serving in the Army, Paul (Keanu Reeves) stumbles across pregnant and husbandless Victoria Aragon and helps her face her father by pretending to be her husband. Soon, their relationship blossoms into a forbidden love. Set in the vineyards of Napa Valley, the spectacular scenery gives an ethereal feel to this appropriately named film. Beautiful!

"A WALK in the Clouds"

5. **"Casablanca"**—There's nothing like a good black-and-white film to tug at one's heartstrings. Ever wonder what made this film such a legend? Was it Humphrey Bogart and Ingrid Bergman's superb acting, or its bittersweet cliffhanger ending? Whatever it is, watch the movie and be the judge.

"EVER AFTER"

4. **"Ever After"**—Everyone loves a good fairytale now and then. Complete with period costumes, breathtaking landscapes and a "Cinderella" that actually fights back, this film is not just your average fairytale retelling.

3. **"Gone With the Wind"**—This was not tagged as "the greatest love story of our time" for nothing. Who could ever forget the immortal love story of Rhett Butler and Scarlett O'Hara against the backdrop of Civil War-America?

2. **"A Walk to Remember"**—An ageless masterpiece that can be enjoyed over and over again. Bad boy meets good girl. Boy and girl fall in love, and just when everything seems to be perfect, a dramatic twist jumps in. It's a recipe for an excellent romance movie. Tissue, anyone?

1. **"The Classic"**—Warning: major tearjerker alert! This remarkable Korean film by the director of "My Sassy Girl" is definitely a must-watch. It has a little bit of everything one could want in a romance movie: humor, history, a surprise ending, drama and the right amount of romance that is heartwarming. Although it has scenes reminiscent of its predecessor, it's a classic on its own. Finding a copy may be a challenge since it's Korean, but if all else fails... Honey, that's what burners are for!

Open your heart to 2bU

BE a part of our Valentine's issue...

We invite you to open your heart to our readers.

Please feel free to send in entries from your journal, pages from real scrapbooks, e-mail or text exchanges, photographs, poetry, songs, essays, greeting cards—anything about love.

It doesn't have to be romantic love. Write about your friends, your pets, your relatives.

It doesn't have to be happy. Write about breakups, unrequited love, obsession, pain.

You can be vague or you can zoom in on one tiny detail—maybe an essay about returning your stuff to each other after a breakup, or the magic of your first real kiss.

We want snapshots of love in different forms and different stages—flings, long-term relationships, even taboo relationships.

Be passionate, be revealing.

We want raw emotions.

Make us feel a twinge. Make us giddy, make us sigh, make us remember our past. We want warm and fuzzy feelings. We want to identify with your experiences.

Our favorite entries will be published next week.

Please send your submissions to Ls_2bu@inquirer.com.ph by Feb. 7, 3 p.m.

Time for more serious beauty regimen

Lora Gabol

FOR A LOT of people, myself included, February is the month of beauty. This is primarily because February is only a couple of months away from summer, aka bikini season, so beauty regimens are stricter, involving a slew of products for every beauty concern imaginable. Two months is time enough for *kikay* cramming.

Then there is Valentine's Day, of course, that one day in the year when all women try to rival Aphrodite, the goddess of love and beauty herself. We primp to death to look our best for our lucky V-Day dates (or to get one), polish ourselves to I'm-worth-a-dozen-roses-and-a-candlelit-dinner perfection. The pre-college bunch make themselves over for their prom night like Cinderella preparing for the royal ball.

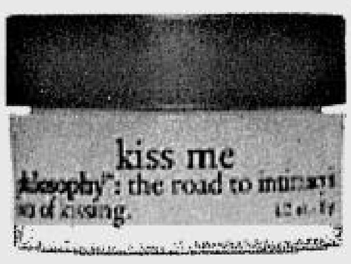
To look your best, remember it is always better to prepare in advance than to deal with a problem only when it arises—like using concealer to camouflage skin that has broken out.

Work on being your natural best. Yup, pre-makeup, pre-designer clothes, pre-three-hour preening in front of the mirror. Here's how you can be a V-Day (or any day) goddess:

Your best face

You may not have zits and blackheads, but take a good look at your complexion. Is it overly dry in some areas? Does it have red patches or tiny irritations?

Lets get back to basics. Take a break from abrasive scrubs and harsh chemical exfoliants—too much of these make the skin sensitive, eventually doing it more harm than good. The products you use to treat acne, for instance, might be too much for the rest of your face. Switch to gentler alternatives to nurse your skin back to health.



PHILOSOPHY'S Kiss Me

Tired-looking skin may be the price for overloading on beauty products. Pallor and rough texture can be as unsightly as blemishes. Your skin needs a breather, and oxygen treatment might be just what it needs.

Oxygen stimulates circulation giving you a healthy glow. It rids the skin of toxins and busts acne as well. How's that for killing an entire flock of birds with one stone?

You can have the treatment done professionally—the Dermclinic's Oxygen Facial or the Belo Medical Group's Obagi Oxygen Facial. Both infuse the skin with a dose of pure oxygen and leave it looking fresh and young. Or you can opt for something you can use everyday. I swear by Avon's Anew Pure O2 Oxygenating Cream. You'll see results—skin that looks really well-rested—in as little as three days.

AVON'S Anew Pure O2 Oxygenating Cream

Don't let your eyes and lips be left behind! It's about time you start taking care of them. Use eye cream religiously—don't use it for a week then stop altogether. Try Nivea Eye Cream—firms up the area while lightening dark circles. Exfoliate your lips with a special product like Smashbox Lip Exfoliant—your kisser has had enough of the old toothbrush already! Follow up with a rich lip balm. (Philosophy's Kiss Me is a new fave!)

Your best hair

Again, be careful not to overload on products, main reason for lackluster and brittle hair. Let your scalp breathe!

If your ends are dry, visit a salon and get a trim for damage control. Have a treatment for your specific hair type to resuscitate your strands. Be meticulous about maintenance. Visit your stylist at least once a month to keep your hair healthy.

Try L'Oreal Professionnel Diacolor Richesse Gloss Treatment to boost moisture and add shine. This mild, non-peroxide treatment won't dry your hair. To "camouflage" dry hair, don't color your hair with lighter shades. Opt for dark browns with red undertones, blond strands will only make hair look "fried."

At home, use a moisturizing shampoo and conditioner combo. Mane 'n' Tail has been on celebrities' must-have lists, they claim the unique formulation makes hair more lush and shiny. I'd recommend this to those with dry hair and scalp. Those who tend to "grease up" may find this formula too rich to the point of being "oily." For serious shine, use Citre Shine Moisture Burst shampoo and conditioner. I've been using both for some time now and getting a lot of compliments. My limp, stick-straight hair actually has some body whenever I use these.

Your best body

For the smoothest skin all over, remember these two words: exfoliate and moisturize. Doing only one won't make a difference. Better discipline yourself if silky skin is what you want.

For the whole body, use a grainy scrub every other day (daily scrubbing might leave skin raw). I'm currently addicted to Human Rice Milk Scrub—it smells and feels heavenly! The milk content helps make skin fairer and more even-toned while the smooth grains eliminate scaly skin.

After your shower, don't scrimp on body moisturizer. While skin is still damp (not wet), apply a rich body lotion (you can get away with this without feeling sticky since the temperature's still on the cool side) using circular movements to stimulate circulation. A regular routine will leave your skin smooth and supple.

For pretty feet, visit your salon for pedicures and scrubs. If you're the do-it-yourself type, you might want to try Home Spa's Foot Kits that include a Milk Foot Bath, Olive Foot Glow Scrub and Olive Foot Butter that leave your tootsies refreshed and smelling really yummy! The Strawberry Milkshake "flavor" is my current obsession, but you can try Choco Fudge and Banana Split for an as-good-as-dessert experience!

For great skin overall, drink at least eight glasses of purified water everyday. This is the best beauty secret. Trust me.

Call 0920-2935057 for Home Spa. Visit www.belomed.com for Belo Medical Group. Avon products are available at SM Megamall and Avon dealers; Nivea and Human at PCX; Smashbox and Philosophy at Beauty Bar; Citre Shine and Mane 'n' Tail at Essenses, Rustan's; Diacolor Richesse Gloss Treatment at L'Oreal salons.

E-mail the author at pai_vanityfare@hotmail.com

WITH HIS Max Brenner family. Arnold Co, Bublé, Ruth Co and daughter Audrey

INSTANT SERVER. Pepper Teehankee waits on Michael and constant date Jenny Santi... *uuy!*

WARNER WIZ. Vanessa Ramirez and Anne Poblador

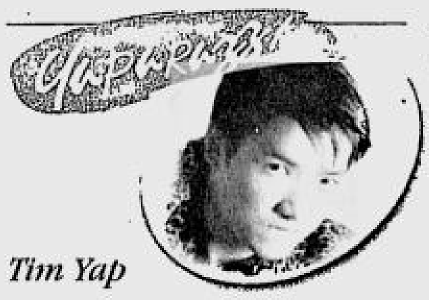
TO INFINITY AND BEYOND. Michael with his band onstage at the Meralco Theater for the launch of Smart Infinity

An addiction called Michael Bublé

"IT'S nice to be back home," **Michael Bublé** winked at the audience with his signature suave style as he took his center-stage seat. By this he didn't mean his native Ontario, Canada, where he grew up, but his newfound nest, Manila, where giant replicas of his face were plastered all over.

At the Meralco Theater to serenade Smart VVIPs for the launch of Infinity—Smart's own butler service of sorts for their premium clientele—Michael was in the best of spirits. It didn't show that he had been touring Manila and conducting research on his favorite city.

"I had to cancel out on my European tour just to get back to Manila," he said without regret. The last time I witnessed an artist give that much love to our city and kept on coming back was during the Menudo era. And he had every reason to come back. Why? Because Manila just can't get enough of him. To put it in a better perspective, the Philippines is addicted to him.


Tim Yap

The past week was a whirlwind of Bublé bubbling back into the scene as invitations to events featuring the artist became the scene's hottest ticket, and tickets for his concerts were fast sold out.

Transported to Grammys

On my way to the lobby of the Meralco Theater, silver-clad performance artists strutted their stuff. Giant installations of the "No. 8" (later, I would discover that this was the symbol of Infinity) were mounted on the entrance walls. Top models in uniforms ushered in the Infinity guests. For a moment, I thought I was transported to the Grammys (which actually happens this weekend).

"Hi" society was in full attendance at the soirée that was centered on Bublé and bubbly. For how could one pass up this opportunity? (Even if you could afford the best seats for the Friday concert, well, they were sold out earlier.) The ones who had their invites made sure they kept them for themselves.

"Today I went around the city and I am saddened about how people are living in the slums. Filipinos are such great people that they do not deserve that kind of living condition." He was not trying to impress me with his views. In fact, he actually seemed very serious the night before his concert when we sat down for dinner at his favorite hotspot, Max Brenner's.

To lighten up the mood, I made him try an assortment of chocolates while I feasted on his main course of prawns and duck (bet you didn't know that the "bald man" serves more than choc'lates—super yum!).

I realized later that he was really serious about his concern, as he donated his honorarium for his Joey@92.3 performance to several charities—Smart Foundation, Joey Cares and Bantay Bata, among others.

MANILA just can't get enough of him.

New dance craze

Back at the Wednesday night spectacular Infinity party (the guys from Smart couldn't have put it better—the party was infinite everything), champagne poured like the gig wanted to rival last year's Louis Vuitton party. By the time the audience reached their seats, the Infinity members were all ready to croon "Come Fly With Me" with Bublé.

Fast forward to Friday, and I was rushing toward Red at the Makati Shangri-La for the after-party of Michael's sold-out performance at PICC. The show's promoter had to turn down last-minute ticket buyers for it was sold out a week before he actually arrived in Manila. Word to the wise: Next time, buy your tickets early.

(Speaking of which, if you wanna reserve for flowers this Valentine's, call **Ana Martha Moreno**—she has the best long-stemmed blooms this side of town, at 0920-9011285.)

At the private function room inside Red, Michael, like a little boy, was having a tête à tête with his band members, making sure that they were all having as much fun as he was. No superstar attitude whatsoever here.

Later, I caught him demonstrating a "new" dance craze that he had just learned—the "ocho ocho." Now how much more Pinoy could he be?

Infinite happenings

Let's get together tonight as L'Oreal launches their sexy and sassy Emporio Armani Night scent at Nuvo. Don't forget: men in black and ladies in red. What a perfect way to spray fragrance into the air.

Thursday becomes a whirlwind as three big events pile on top of each other. For car enthusiasts, speed freaks and the poshies, it's a red letter day for **Paolo Martel's** C! magazine—the scene's favorite guide for the autophiles out there,

SMART CHOICE. Bublé receives his new phone from Smart main man Boy Martirez.

as he holds his first anniversary party at the NBC Tent at 6:30 p.m.

Also at that time, Rustans' U, that purveyor of hip clothing and accessories, celebrates the opening of its newest store at the fifth level of Rustan's Tower in Edsa Shangri-La. I've been to the store, and I must say, the interiors designed by hip and hot architect **Chut Cuerva** is something to check out—aside from the merchandise, of course.

Thursday night is also the launch party of the Metropolitan Theater Guild, which is composed of young people who want to revolutionize the theater industry. And what better way to jumpstart it than by throwing a big party at Dreambar 6750? **Steven Uy**, the group's visionary, has only one word to say: "Believe." Expect to see more of them in the months to come.

While we're on the topic of young art, **Sofia Elizalde** is staging a show for her Steps stalwarts this Friday, titled "Red, White and Blue," 6:30 p.m. at Steps studio. Expect nothing but the best from her hardworking and talented students.

Partyphiles, always remember, "Life is not measured by the breaths we take, but by the moments that take our breath away."

SMART SET. Geni Psinakis, Francisco Delgado and Trina Santos

BUBBLY FRIENDS. Nick Vicens, Tympany and Savannah Lumen

Hung up on exes

Niño Mark Sablan & September Mabino

DEAR Mark and Sep,

I only liked my new boyfriend because he looked a lot like my ex, whom I couldn't seem to get over. I learned to love him because of the things he showed me. Our love became stronger and I tried my best to forget my ex.

The problem is, he can't seem to get over his ex, too. He admitted to me that his ex was still his crush and I told him I understood because I felt the same way about my ex.

But I really feel insecure when his ex's name pops out when we talk... because of my jealousy, when he [told] stories about his ex, I also told him how good my ex was when we were still together.

I know it hurts him but it's the only way I know to make him feel the same way I feel. I accept that maybe his ex is prettier than me, but sometimes my jealousy makes me wish [to do] things that will let him know [my] worth. I'm too shy to tell this to anybody, but my insecurity is eating me up alive. Please help me.

MS JEALOUS

Wow, let me get this straight. Both of you aren't over your respective ex-partners. Both of you are insecure about each other's ex. And you make each another jealous by using your previous partners.

Why are you even together? Break up this moment and go back to your past loves.

But I'm assuming they're happily involved at the moment, which is why you're stuck with one another. So I guess you make a perfect pair after all. Both of you are on the rebound and are happily each other's rebound partner.

One of these days, one of you is going to seriously pursue The Previous One, and the other will feel devastatingly dumped just because he or she didn't do it first. Agree on a cooling-off period to rethink about who you really want (and maybe to see if you can win your past partners back). I'm sure this will bring forth some cinematic reconciliation/s.

MARK

And you call yourselves a couple?

Well, yes, I guess. You're a couple of miserable people. Instead of being together for the usual reasons of love, affection and happiness, misery is what keeps you together. What makes things even more ironic (or moronic) is the more time you spend together, the more miserable the two of you become.

Frankly, I find it strange and horrific that you compare exes' notes with the full and conscious intention to hurt each other.

If you want to be happy, a good start would be to end this sick, pathetic relationship. It's the only way you can begin to find out what and who would be good for you. You and your current boyfriend may truly believe that you love each other, but your definition of what love is leaves a lot to be desired. You're both pining for other people, for goodness' sake! That should be reason enough for you to stop this farce.

Magpakatotoo kayo, mga kapatid.

SEPTEMBER

E-mail the writers at markandsep@yahoo.com. Chatroom is asking letter senders to indicate if they want their e-mail addresses printed so wannabe Marks and Seps out there can get in touch with the problematic readers and send their comments and/or advice.

Philippine Daily Inquirer
MESSAGEBOARD

Valentine Classifieds

Express your **heartfelt valentine wish** to your loved ones through the widest read Inquirer Classifieds messageboard.

On **February 14, 2004**, the Inquirer Classifieds now accepts personal ads for the "Valentine Classifieds special section" dedicated to those you hold dearest to your heart.

Jo,
You're the best! I'm the luckiest...
I love you!
Victor
1 col x 3 cm = P250

Donn
Thank you for being you... and for being mine!
Happy Valentine's Day!
Lia
1 col x 5 cm = P500

Kris,
You're one of my greatest blessings.
I thank God for giving me such a wonderful wife.
I love you very much.
Michael
2 col x 5 cm = P1,000

Vince,
Happy Heart's Day!
Joanna
1 col x 2 cm = P100

Mel,
For the woman I love... all my life... with all my heart.
I love you more.
John Paul
2 col x 3 cm = P500

Grab this offer and this will surely be one of the finest gift your loved ones will ever get.
Visit or call any Inquirer Classified Ads Branch now for more details.

Prices are VAT exclusive
Rate is applicable on the February 14 issue only.
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Ticket prizes are as follows: P2,950 for premiere, P2,650 for de luxe, P1,550 for patron, P750 for the bleachers and P350 for general admission. Tickets are available at all National Bookstore Ticketworld outlets. Call 3742222, 3749999, 8919999.

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During lunch, I just grabbed a sandwich and sat with my girlfriend and her *barkada*. I decided to study a little while I was waiting for them to finish eating. When they were done, my girlfriend asked me if I could lend her the keys to my car because she wanted to put down some of the books she was carrying. I offered to do it for her but she said that I should just get back to studying because she knew I had exams coming.

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I hope that 2bU! will help me give my girlfriend the Valentine's Day she deserves."—**Charles Navarro, 20, Quezon City**

Winner(s) must present their ID when claiming VIP tickets and James Ingram's latest CD at Circe Communications Inc. Unit 809 Vicente Madrigal Bldg. 6793 Ayala Ave., Makati. Look for Mic Florendo or Flor Hardin or call 8172940.

Share with us your favorite memories

WHAT was your best experience at a Shakey's restaurant?

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"I have lots of Shakey's memories because I consider myself a pizza person. My story happened in what used to be our favorite hang out—Shakey's Concepcion in Manila. It was over a decade ago. I had just finished high school and I had two girlfriends at the same time. Both of them loved to listen to live bands and that's why we frequented Shakey's.

One Saturday night, my girlfriend Rosemary invited me to attend a birthday party but I refused. I told her I didn't go to parties if I didn't know the celebrants, but the real reason was that day was the birthday of Luz, my other girlfriend. She was having a party at Shakey's Concepcion which was our favorite venue.

When the party was about to begin, I got the surprise of my life when I saw Rosemary who walked into the restaurant and greeted Luz with a kiss on her cheek. My face was all red and didn't know what to do. I wanted to put myself inside a barrel of draft beer just to hide myself.

Luz and Rosemary knew each other but didn't know that they were sharing the same boyfriend.

After the party, I said sorry to her but she gave me a slap. Rosemary told Luz everything and I lost her as well. It was a story I will never forget, because it taught me that love should not be treated as a game and girls should be treated fairly."—**Arnulfo Myxan Acosta, Quezon City**

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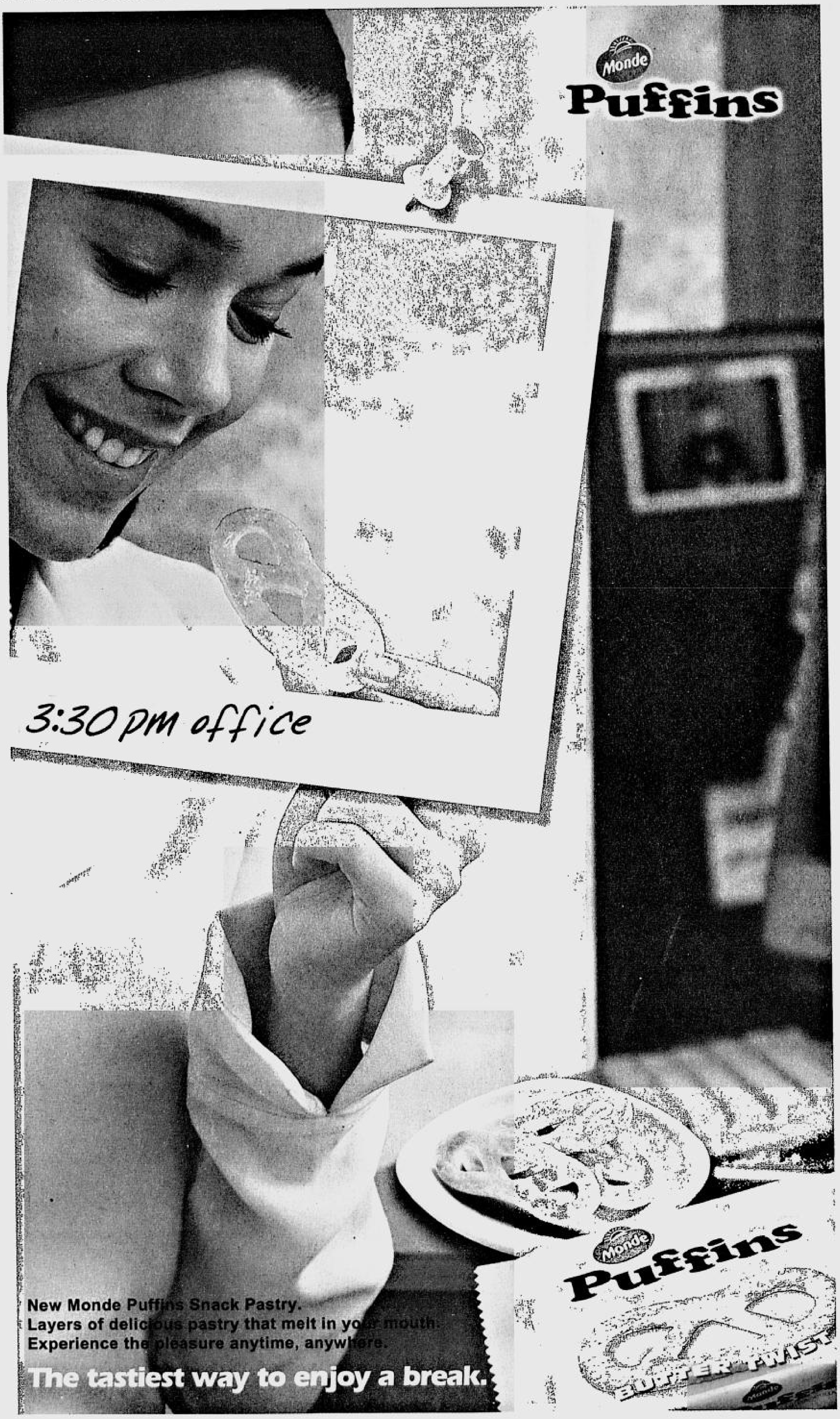
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New Monde Puffins Snack Pastry.
Layers of delicious pastry that melt in your mouth.
Experience the pleasure anytime, anywhere.
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Palace fires DPWH usec for bribing lifestyle probers

Story on PAGE A4

Jailed cop real hero in battle vs Moro rebs

I'M THE HERO
AND I'M THE REAL HERO

By Christian V. Esguerra

A POLICE officer detained on a murder case is the real "Liberator of Siocon."

The Philippine National Police yesterday said it might have

JAILED/ A5

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

email: feedback@inquirer.com.ph

Thursday, February 5, 2004 ★★ 44 pages / 4 sections / vol. 19 / no. 59 P15

website: www.inq7.net

Mercado, Quezon join Inquirer as columnists

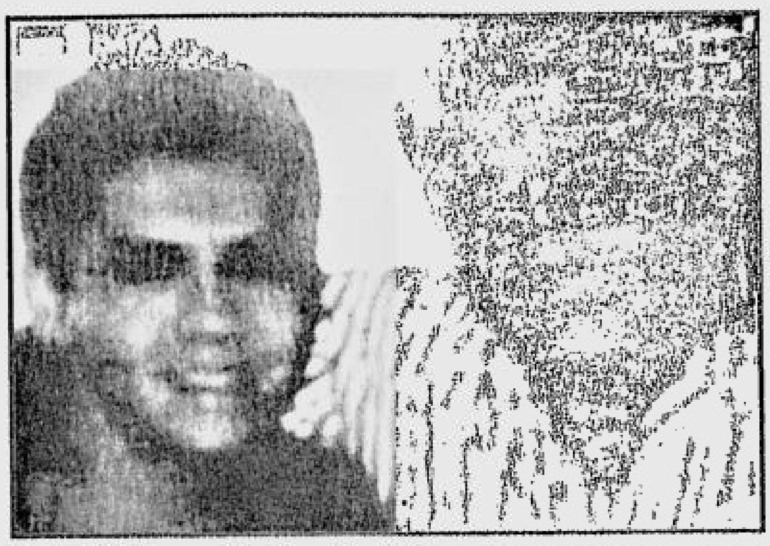
TWO prominent writers are writing columns for the Philippine Daily Inquirer beginning this week.

The two are Juan "Johnny" Mercado, a veteran journalist and former communications officer of the United Nations, and Manuel Quezon III, former presidential assistant for historical affairs and former columnist and editori-

MERCADO/ A5

JIM GUIAO PUNZALAN

MEETING the issue head on, Susan Roces answers questions from the press about her husband's son at the opening of "Cinema Paraiso 2 Festival," in Intramuros.



"SPITTING" image of his father, Ron-An (pronounced Ron-yan), also called little Ronnie, has long been an open secret in show biz circles. GMA TV GRAB

FPJ proud of son by another woman

'It's a non-issue ... it's the truth'

DAVAO CITY—Presidential candidate Fernando Poe Jr. yesterday expressed pride in his child by another woman and said his wife had long known of his son's existence.

Poe said he had had a "heart-to-heart talk" with his wife, actress Susan Roces, regarding Ron-an, now a 22-year-old university student, his son by starlet Ana Marin. *"Natanggap na niya ito* (She has accepted the fact)," he said, adding that even their adopted daughter, Mary Grace, knew about it.

The movie idol, standard-bearer of the opposition Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino (KNP), met with reporters after the mass oath-taking of new recruits to the Fernando Poe Jr. for president movement.

He said he spoke with Ron-an after he came clean on the matter over the TV program "Bio-Data" on GMA-7 Tuesday night.

"I'm proud of him," Poe said, adding that it was good Ron-an would complete his studies, unlike himself.

He said that with his public acknowledgement of his son, this would no longer be a campaign issue. "It's a non-issue because it's the truth. *Hindi naman namin ito itinatago* (We're not hiding it)," he said.

FPJ/ A6

Susan stands by her man

By Marinel R. Cruz

"YOU don't deny your child."

This is according to actress Susan Roces, who proved yesterday that she is standing by her man, presidential candidate Fernando Poe Jr., after he readily admitted on Tuesday that he had a love child with sometime movie starlet Ana Marin.

"More than anything,

SUSAN/ A6

BING GONZALES/PDI MINDANAO BUREAU

THE CAT is out of the bag, and FPJ appears relieved as he and running mate Sen. Loren Legarda arrive in Davao City for the mass oath-taking of recruits to their campaign.

Loren takes swipe at Noli as a man 'without a brain'

GENERAL SANTOS CITY—Sen. Loren Legarda yesterday took a swipe at her closest rival for the vice presidency, suggesting that Sen. Noli de Castro lacked the intelligence required for the post.

"It's not enough to be a man of the masses without a brain, and not enough for a brain without a heart for the masses. A candidate must possess both, and I'm lucky to have both virtues," the vice presidential candidate of the opposition Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino declared at a press conference when asked to identify her supposed edge over De Castro, running mate of President Macapagal-Arroyo.

Legarda was in General Santos to distribute books donated by her foundation to the Ireneo Santiago National High School and to lead the mass oath-taking of members of the Fernando Poe Jr. for President Movement at the Lagao gymnasium.

Both former newsreaders of the Lopez-owned ABS-CBN, Legarda and De Castro are professed good friends.

Legarda said she was not making an empty claim because Senate records would prove that she had been a performing legislator.

She said that she had authored 291

LOREN/ A6

'Kawal spokesman' surrenders, tags Saycon

By Leila B. Salaverria and Christian V. Esguerra

THE "CAPTAIN GABAY" who read the manifesto of Kawal Pilipino at the group's press conference last week is not a lawyer as earlier reported but a law student at the Far Eastern University claiming to be engaged in the multi-level marketing business of the First Quadrant.

Baltazar Asadon surrendered to the National Bureau of Investigation and tagged Pastor "Boy" Saycon, secretary general of the Council on Philippine Affairs (Copa), as a key player in the alleged plot to destabilize the government.

Asadon, who was reported last week as a lawyer named Azoden Baltazar, said Saycon forced him to wear an undersized military uniform and to read Kawal Pilipino's manifesto denouncing President Macapagal-Arroyo for ordering the military to spy on his rivals in the presidential election and to prevent any one of them from winning. The group also

KAWAL/ A8

Supreme Court scolds Nani's law partner

By Alcuin Papa

FOR LEAKING questions for the 2003 bar exams, the Supreme Court reprimanded a law partner of former Justice Secretary Hernando Perez and disbarred another lawyer of the Balgos and Perez Law Office.

In a resolution it issued yesterday, the high court voted 12-0 to reprimand Marcial O.T. Balgos, examiner in the 2003 Mercantile Law exam and senior partner in the Balgos and Perez Law Office. The court said Balgos was not entitled to receive any honorarium as an examiner in the bar exams.

Danilo de Guzman, Balgos' assistant, was barred by the high court from practicing law.

In an earlier investigation initiated by the high court, it was found that De Guzman had faxed the Mercantile Law questions to a fraternity brother. De Guzman belongs to the Far Eastern University (FEU) chapter of the Beta Sigma Lambda.

The high court directed the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) to determine the criminal culpability of De Guzman and eight other people in the leakage.

The others were identified as Cheryl Palma, a secretary of Balgos for the past six

SUPREME/ A5

GMA: Argentina extreme scenario for RP

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr. and Clarissa S. Batino

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo yesterday described as an extreme scenario a warning of the London-based Standard Chartered Bank (SCB) that the Philippines may sink into a foreign debt crisis similar to what befell Argentina two years ago.

Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas Governor Rafael Buenaventura, however, said the country may plunge into such a crisis in two to three years if the government fails to effectively deal with its low tax collection, huge budget deficit, and mounting debt.

SCB issued the warning against a backdrop of a deteriorating foreign exchange rate and falling stock prices—two indicators of declining business confidence—in the run-up to the May 10 presidential election.

GMA/ A6

Death ruling elates Chiongs, stuns convicts' kin

By Jhunnex Napallacan
PDI Visayas Bureau

CEBU CITY—An answered prayer.

This was how Thelma Chiong described the Supreme Court decision meting out the death penalty to six of the seven young men who kidnapped and raped her daughters Marijoy and Jacqueline in 1997.

She has every intention of being present at the execution.

For six years, this mother has been praying for justice. On Tuesday, her prayers were finally answered.

While Chiong was jubilant, the parents of the seven convicts were distraught when they learned of the Supreme Court resolution.

The high court imposed the death penalty on six of the convicts, instead of merely affirming the two life sentences handed down by the late Judge Martin Ocampo on May 5, 1999.

The six are Francisco Juan "Paco" Larrañaga, a scion of the influential and powerful Osmeña clan, Jozman Aznar, whose family owns

DEATH/ A8

BBRC
BBRC
BBRC

THE CHIONG 7 in this file photo were each meted out a double life sentence at the Cebu RTC in May 1999. From left, James Andrew Uy, James Anthony Uy, Ariel Balansag, Josman Aznar, Rowen Adlawan and Francisco Juan Larranaga. Not in photo is Alberto Cano. PDI PHOTO FILE

Second FRONTPAGE

E-mail: pr_news@inquirer.com.ph

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Northeastern Luzon, Eastern Visayas and the whole of Mindanao will experience mostly cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers and isolated thunderstorms. The rest of the country will be partly cloudy to at times cloudy with isolated rainshowers.
SOURCE: PAGASA

COMPILED BY: RAY LEYESA, PDI RESEARCH/02/05/04

Metro Manila	Partly Cloudy	Iloilo/Bacolod	Partly Cloudy
Baguio	Partly Cloudy	Roxas	Partly Cloudy
Tuguegarao	Cloudy with Rains	Cebu	Partly Cloudy
Laoag	Partly Cloudy	Tacloban	Cloudy with Rains
Clark Zone	Partly Cloudy	Gen. Santos	Cloudy with Rains
Tagaytay	Partly Cloudy	Zamboanga	Cloudy with Rains
Legaspi	Partly Cloudy	Cagayan de Oro	Cloudy with Rains
Calapan	Partly Cloudy	Davao	Cloudy with Rains

GMA keeps hands off budget row

By Gil C. Cabacungan and Cynthia D. Balana

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo will not lift a finger to break the standoff between the House of Representatives and the Senate on the passage of this year's budget bill.

The President has also been non-committal on whether she preferred the 2004 or the 2003 version of the budget.

In a press briefing in Dumaguete City yesterday, Ms Macapagal said she is leaving it entirely up to the Congress to decide on whether to adopt the P864.8 billion budget for 2004 or reenact the P804 billion of 2003 for this year.

The President ignored a question on whether she preferred a reenactment of the 2003 budget because, as some senators have alleged, it will give her more leeway to allocate funds that her rivals fear could be used to boost her campaign to be elected to a full, six-year term.

As the senators have noted, since most of the project allocations for 2003 have already been made, the President could quite easily divert the funds for 2004 into other areas that could help her win the election.

Evasive

Malacañang has been quite evasive about which budget the President preferred.

Presidential spokesperson Ignacio Bunye said the President's main concern in the budget debate was that "any agreement should serve the best interests of the average Filipino with the least impact on vital anti-poverty programs and projects."

With Congress set to go on recess tomorrow, Bunye said the President was "optimistic" the two chambers would reach a common ground since their leaders have remained in "constant touch."

The administration-led House majority has been playing hardball with the Senate on the passage of the 2004 General Appropriations Act, apparently hoping that the delay will automatically lead to the reenactment of the 2003 budget.

The senators say that House members prefer the 2003 budget because it provides them with more pork barrel funds than the 2004 version.

At the House, administration Rep. Prospero Nograles said yesterday the budget deadlock was "bad karma" for the Senate for not giving due importance to the work that their counterparts in the House have done.

Nograles said the Senate leadership should stop attacking House members for stonewalling on the 2004 budget as the senators have themselves refused to act on pending local legislation.

"This borders on apathy and insensitivity to the plight of the ordinary man on the street," he said.

Nograles said most House members strongly feel that the 2004 GAA was too unrealistic in the way it assessed government's ability to generate revenues to fund the budget.

He said a reenacted 2003 budget, which the House insists on, would be more manageable and could limit further borrowings by government.

'Overacting'

He said the senators were simply "overacting" on the budget issue because they cannot explain why they have not acted on the pending local legislation.

There are 163 national bills and 804 local bills which have been passed by the House of Representatives but are now gathering cobwebs in the Senate, he said.

These bills will have to be again filed in the 13th Congress, which would mean a waste of time, energy and manpower resources, he said.

Among the bills pending in the Senate are "high-impact" anti-poverty legislation such as House Bill 5553 which seeks to establish a "socialized and low-cost house loan" restructuring program which was transmitted to the Senate on Feb. 1, 2003, the congressman said.

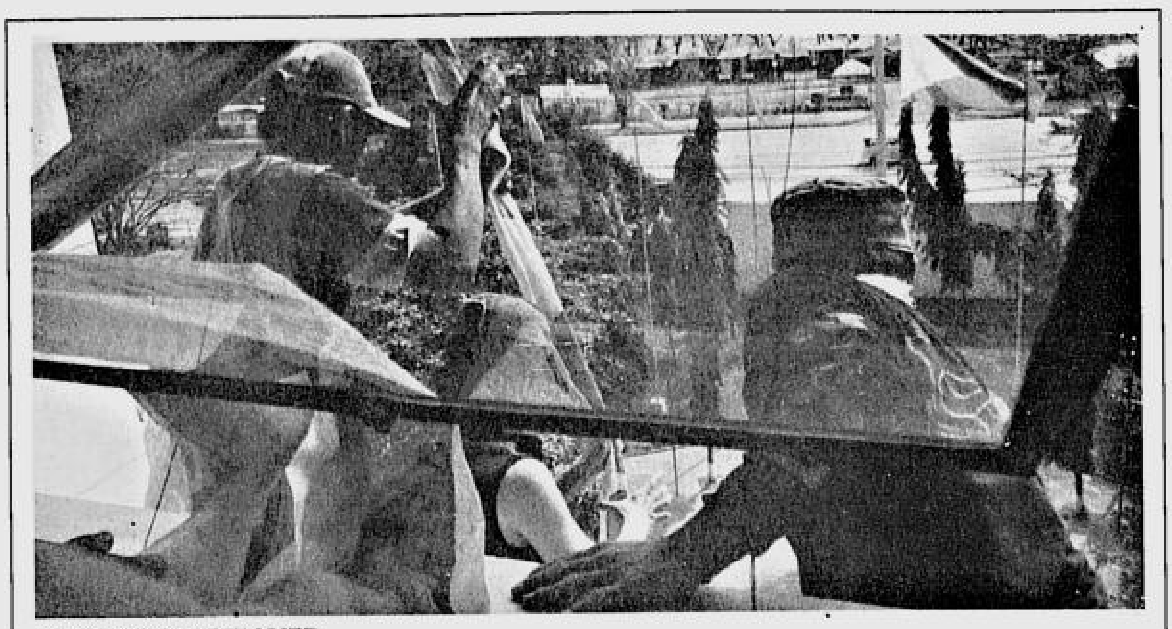
Nograles said the measure, which would ease the burden of thousands of Filipino families who are facing repayment problems on their housing loans, has yet to be acted on by the Senate housing committee.

"Had this bill been given immediate attention by the Senate, a lot of people would have stopped worrying on the prospect of getting their homes repossessed by the banks," he said.

Nograles said the Senate also failed to act on hundreds of measures which would have created new school buildings to remedy the acute shortage of classrooms.

He said the Senate would rather conduct endless Senate investigations such as the Jose Pidal inquiry instead of attending to measures that would have helped address the problems of housing and basic education.

"What good is a Senate that does not pass laws to help the people?" he asked.



FARMERS' TAKEOVER
Angry farmers from all over the country, most of them from Davao, look through the window of the Department of Agrarian Reform after forcibly entering the building and occupying it Wednesday. The farmers are calling for the ouster of Agrarian Reform Secretary Roberto Pagdanganan. The incident came after Pagdanganan claimed last week he had appeased the farmers and convinced them to return to the provinces. EDWIN BACASMAS

Palace bucks revival of Jose Pidal probe

By Juliet Labog-Javellana

MALACAÑANG yesterday balked at the reopening of the Senate investigation on the Jose Pidal exposé against First Gentleman Jose Miguel "Mike" Arroyo, saying it was a clear case of political mudslinging.

"They (opposition) can't find a case against President Gloria so they are looking for an excuse thus we can say this is political mudslinging," presidential spokesperson Ignacio Bunye said in an RMN interview.

Bunye said the Jose Pidal case was a "dead issue" because opposition Sen. Panfilo Lacson was unable to present authentic documentary evidence to bolster his charges that the First Gentleman owned secret accounts hidden under the name of Jose Pidal.

The First Gentleman's brother, Ignacio "Iggy" Arroyo, later owned up to the Jose Pidal accounts but he refused to divulge details of his accounts, invoking his right to privacy.

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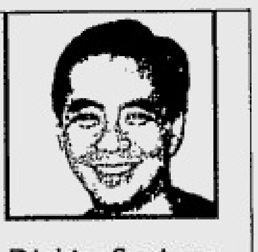

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GMA asked to halt evictions

By Carlito Pablo

HOUSING Secretary Michael Defensor has recommended to President Macapagal-Arroyo a moratorium on eviction proceedings against some 110,000 owners of low-cost, government-financed housing across the country.

Defensor, who is also the President's campaign spokesperson, has submitted a draft executive order freezing foreclosure proceedings until after June 30 and a review of the government housing agencies' loan restructuring and repayment schemes.

Copies of the memorandum and draft executive order from Defensor, chair of the Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council, were released to media by party-list Rep. JV Bautista.

Bautista delivered a privilege speech late last year concerning the massive evictions set to begin in the first quarter of 2004.

He said thousands of homeowners had fallen on hard times and were defaulting on their payments.

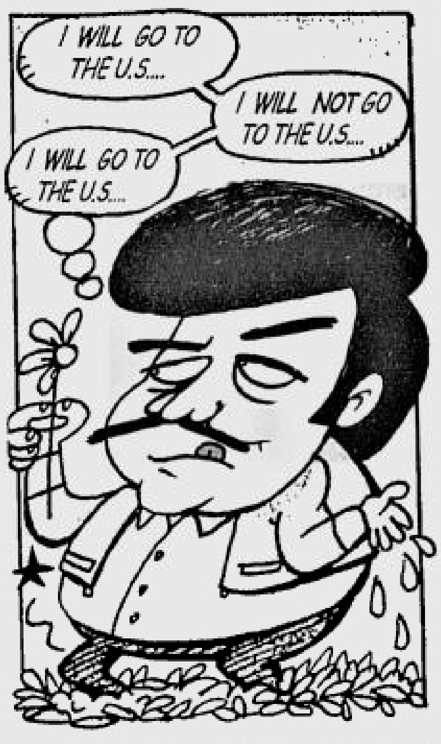
If signed by Ms Macapagal, the executive order will stop the foreclosures and cancellations of low-cost housing accounts until June 30.

The government agencies involved are the National Home Mortgage Finance Corp., Home Development Mutual Fund or Pag-Ibig, Government Service Insurance System and the Social Security System.

According to Bautista, some 110,000 homeowners were in danger of being kicked out of their homes in the first three months of this year alone.

V-Day is D-Day for ailing Erap

By Armand N. Nocum


I WILL GO TO THE U.S....
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VALENTINE'S Day is D-Day for ousted President Joseph Estrada.

But far from the notorious womanizer being left to attend to matters of the heart, an apparently exasperated Sandiganbayan has given Estrada until Feb. 14 to make up his mind about what he wants to do about his problematic knees.

At yesterday's hearing, Justice Minita Chico-Nazario, presiding judge of the Sandiganbayan special division trying Estrada for plunder, blurted out her frustrations over Estrada's continued delay in submitting to the court the details of his plan to travel to the United States for knee-replacement surgery.

"Why is it taking you so long?" Nazario asked Estrada's court-appointed lawyers, Manuel Pamaran and Noel Malaya, when they sought for another extension of the period given to them to submit Estrada's travel plans.

The date of Estrada's departure has been pushed back three times since the court issued its Dec. 23 resolution allowing Estrada to go abroad, provided he submits to the court his schedule of operation, the name of the doctors operating on him and the hospital where the operation will take place.

The ostensible cause of the delay was Estrada's balking at the $1.2 million being charged by Stanford Medical Center surgeon Christopher Mow for the operation.

Visa problems

Estrada claims to be scouting around for other US doctors who can operate on him.

The jailed ex-President also claimed to have encountered problems getting a US visa because of a new US regulation denying entry to foreign leaders facing criminal charges at home.

But Nazario is apparently not buying the reasons given for the delay.

"It makes us think, why it is taking you so long to negotiate with the doctors and the hospital?" she said. She said that in a case like this, it would make sense for doctors to wrap matters up quickly, considering the profits they would make.

"Do it the soonest if you are really bent on having your client undergo surgery in the US," she told Estrada's lawyers.

Nazario and three other Sandiganbayan justices have been criticized for giving Estrada permission to go abroad. Government and private prosecutors insist that there is no immediate need for Estrada to do so as the kind of operation he needs can be done in the country.

No pressing need

Special Prosecutor Dennis Villa-Ignacio said the delays have proven right prosecutors' arguments that there really is no pressing need for Estrada to go abroad for an operation.

"These are all delaying tactics... dilatory moves," said Villa-Ignacio, pointing out that the trial for the main case of plunder and graft against Estrada has not moved in the past 10 months.

He said it is possible that Estrada is asking his lawyers to file motions not related to the main case to skirt the prospects of being forced to present evidence in his defense, which he said he doubts the disgraced leader has.

He said Estrada is clearly buying time, waiting for a favorable climate after the May elections.

NORWAY SEA TRAGEDY

2 bodies found in sunken ship

OSLO, Norway—Divers recovered the bodies of two victims trapped aboard a freighter that capsized in a Norwegian inlet more than two weeks ago. Eleven of the 18 dead were still missing.

Trygve Hillestad, of the Hordaland Police District, said Tuesday the bodies were found but were not immediately identified. Five other bodies were recovered shortly after the Jan. 19 accident, and 12 crew were rescued.

The 166-meter freighter Rocknes, with a mostly Filipino crew of 30, abruptly capsized in a western Norway inlet after running aground.

Last week it was towed to a base near Bergen, 320 kilometers west of the capital, Oslo, so divers could search the overturned wreck for victims.

Hillestad said the bodies were found on an interior deck just below the ship's bridge. He said conditions were difficult for the divers, due to poor visibility and floating objects in their way.

He said the search, which began Monday, would continue at a cautious pace. It took two weeks to begin because the upside-down hull was too unstable to enter until it was towed to the base and secured to a barge.

The ship was bound for Germany with a load of stone when it ran aground and tore open ballast tanks designed to help keep it upright.

The ship, operated by Bergen-based Jebsen Management, was built in 2001. The crew included 24 Filipinos, three Dutch, two Norwegians and one German. *AP*

Pinoy terror suspect arrested in N. Ireland

A FILIPINO clerk suspected of providing funds to the Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) terrorist organization was arrested in Northern Ireland last week, sources at the foreign office here said Wednesday.

Northern Ireland authorities arrested the 30-year-old man last Friday in Belfast and charged him with two counts of "making funds available to others for the purpose of terrorism," the sources said, citing an official report received by the Philippine Embassy in London.

His wife, a nurse at the Royal Victoria Hospital in Belfast, was also brought in for questioning but later released without charge.

The Philippine government as well as antiterror allies the United States and Australia provided intelligence information leading to the arrest.

Legal assistance is expected to extended to the man, the sources said.

The JI is believed to be the Southeast Asian arm of Osama bin Laden's al-Qaida network, which is blamed for October 2002 bombings in Bali, Indonesia, that left over 200 dead.

Intelligence authorities in the region say JI has linked up with other Islamic militants in the region, including Muslim separatist rebels in the southern Philippines.

US authorities last year arrested JI leader Riduan Isamuddin, also known as Hambali, who they said have been providing information against their information under interrogation. *AFP*

33 Sokors to be deported

THIRTY-THREE South Koreans will be deported from the Philippines for allegedly carrying tampered travel documents, officials said yesterday.

Immigration Commissioner Alipio Fernandez Jr. said the group was prevented from boarding a flight to Inchon, South Korea, on Monday after officials at Manila's international airport found fake arrival and departure stamps in their passports.

The stamps made it appear they left and re-entered the country before the expiration of their stay permit in the Philippines, Fernandez said in a statement. The Koreans allegedly admitted they never left since arriving here in December 2002, the statement said.

The head of the immigration regulation division, Gary Mendoza, said the Koreans, all in their early 20s, said they were members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. They claimed they entrusted the extension of their visas to their travel agent and were not aware of any fraud, he said. *AP*

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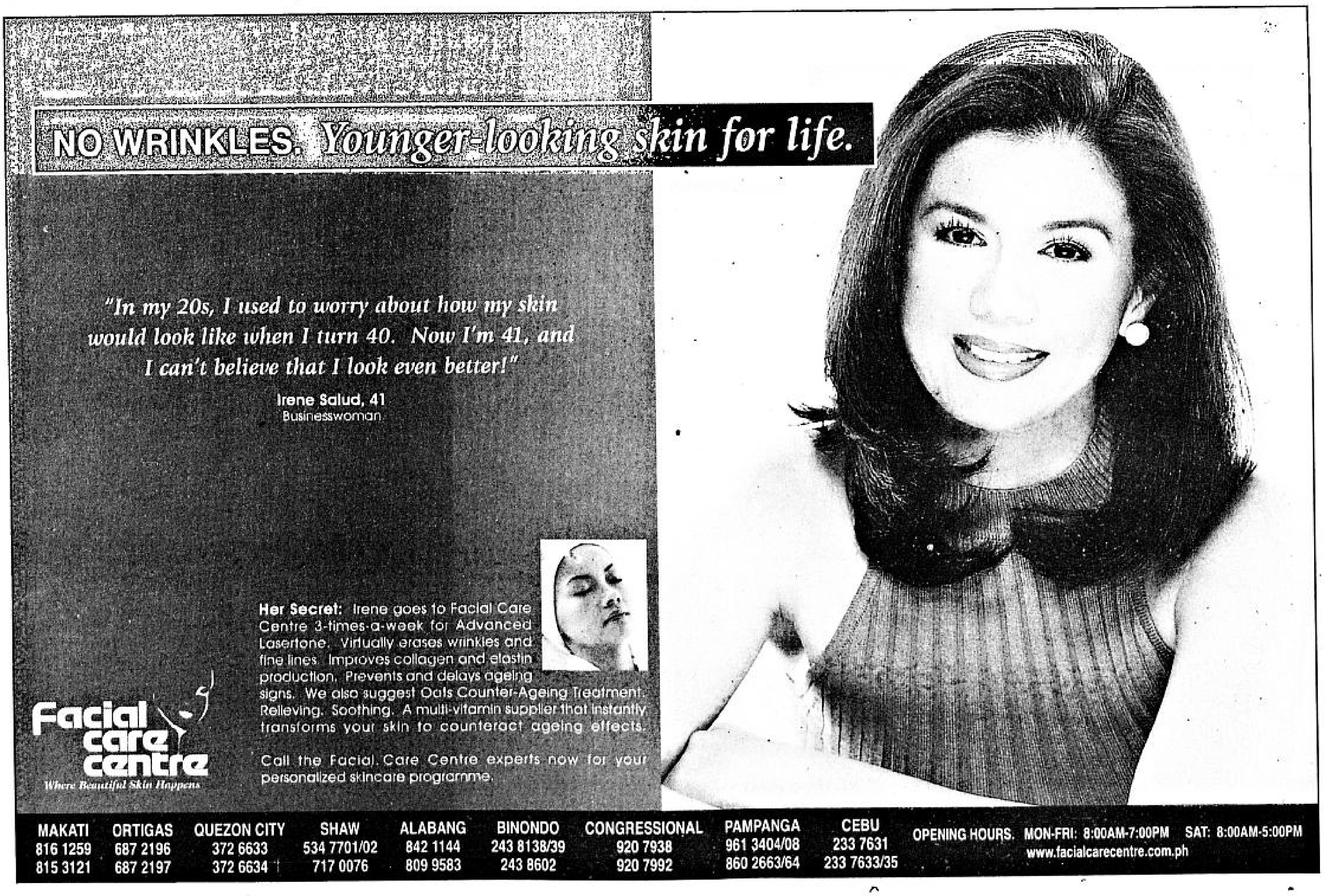

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Palace fires DPWH usec for bribing lifestyle probers

By Armand N. Nocum

MALACAÑANG has dismissed from the service a ranking Department of Public Works and Highways official for allegedly giving millions of pesos in bribes to two officials in the Ombudsman's office in exchange for their giving him a "clearance" in the lifestyle check program.

Undersecretary Salvador Pleyto became the first Macapagal appointee to be dismissed from the service since the administration's anti-corruption drive went into high gear in March 2003.

"Pleyto was charged before the PAGC for allegedly giving two ranking officials of the Ombudsman millions of pesos in bribe money in exchange for a clearance," the Presidential Anti-Graft Commission said in a statement yesterday.

The PAGC issued the statement a day after the PAGC, the Office of the Ombudsman and other government and private agencies under the Lifestyle Check Coalition came under attack for allegedly targeting only "small fry" and not Cabinet members with pending graft cases.

The PAGC said that Pleyto was also accused of allegedly asking various contractors for money and for "carrying an illicit relationship with a woman" who allegedly received gifts of a brand new Mercedes Benz and a BMW from him.

The PAGC also found the DPWH official liable for his failure to declare in his statement of assets and liabilities certain business interests that he owns with his wife.

"In the course of the investigation that was conducted by the PAGC, it was discovered that Pleyto had failed to disclose in his SAL for three years the business interest and financial connections of his wife whom he consistently declared was a businesswoman," the PAGC said.

The agency recommendation that Malacañang fire Pleyto was affirmed by the Palace on Jan. 20.

Pleyto was slapped with a six-month suspension last year for failing the lifestyle check conducted by the Ombudsman's office. He was found to have amassed wealth beyond his legal means.

The PAGC has also submitted to the Palace its findings on the graft case against former Agrarian Reform Secretary Hernani Braganza, but the Palace has yet to release the report.

PAGC chair Dario Rama said that contrary to reports, the PAGC was "preparing formal charges against several high-ranking government officials, all of whom are presidential appointees."

Aside from Braganza, other current and former Cabinet members facing graft charges before the PAGC and the Ombudsman are former Justice Secretary Hernando Perez, Environment Secretary Elisea G. Gozun, Public Works Secretary Florante Soriquez and Philippine Ports Authority head Alfonso Cusi.

More recently, graft cases were filed against Comelec Chair Benjamin Abalos and six other commissioners, and former National Archives Director Ricardo Manapat.

BODY LANGUAGE

President Macapagal Arroyo is seen as a silhouette gesturing during a speech in yesterday's groundbreaking of a roll on-roll off port project in Dumaguete City. She operated a backhoe during the groundbreaking of the port and rehabilitation of the city's Flores Avenue. VAL HANDUMON

Decide now, Comelec urged on FPJ case

By Martin P. Marfil and TJ Burgonio

THE COMMISSION on Elections was asked yesterday by contending parties in the disqualification case against opposition presidential standard bearer Fernando Poe Jr. to immediately resolve the issue.

This developed as another presidential candidate, Raul Roco, said he would petition the Supreme Court to immediately decide on Poe's citizenship.

"We will ask the Supreme Court ... to decide on Poe's citizenship issue at the earliest possible time. The Filipino people are entitled to know (the ruling early)," Roco, standard bearer of Aksyon ng Demokratiko, said in a statement.

Roco appealed to the people "to respect and uphold the decision that will be based on the rule of law."

In separate memorandums to the Comelec, lawyers Andresito Fornier, who sought to disqualify the movie actor from the presidential race, and Poe's counsel Sixto Brillantes told the poll body that it had jurisdiction over the case.

The Comelec's first division earlier dismissed the petition filed by Fornier to disqualify Poe.

But Fornier filed a motion for reconsideration alleging that Poe is not a natural-born citizen of the Philippines as required by law since he was an illegitimate child who was born in 1939 and whose parents were married in 1940.

Because of this, Fornier argued that since Poe's mother was an American, Poe's citizenship should follow that of his mother.

The Comelec held a hearing the other day and told the parties to submit their respective memorandums.

In his memorandum, Brillantes urged the Comelec not to wait for the resolution of the Poe citizenship case which is pending before the Supreme Court as the case before the Comelec was based on Section 78 of the Omnibus Electioin Code.

Under the election code, Brillantes said the commission can deny due course or cancel the certificate of candidacy of a candidate "exclusively on the ground that any material misrepresentation contained therein ... is false".

Brillantes pointed out that the two cases before the Supreme Court were based on Article IV of Section 4, Paragraph 7 of the Constitution which states that the Supreme Court, sitting en banc, shall be the sole judge of all contests relating to the election, returns and qualifications of the President or Vice President.

He also said the high court has not given the petitions due course, merely told the commission to comment and has not issued a temporary restraining order.

On the other hand, Fornier reiterated that Comelec had jurisdiction over the issue.

He said the issue of being a natural-born citizen cannot be divorced from the determination that Poe made "material misrepresentation" or a false entry in his certificate of candidacy.

According to Fornier, since no elections have been held, the Supreme Court cannot assume jurisdiction over the case as it can only act as Presidential Electoral Tribunal in "post-proclamation" cases.

House approves compensation bill

WITH 129 congressmen voting in favor, 11 against and 7 abstaining, the House of Representatives last night approved on third and final reading the Human Rights Compensation Act of 2004 which provides for state compensation to some 9,000 victims of gross human rights violations during the regime of the late dictator Ferdinand Marcos.

House Bill No. 4535, authored mainly by rights abuse victims who are now members of Congress, seeks to create an P8 billion compensation fund for the victims from the $684 million Marcos Swiss deposits which the Supreme Court recently declared ill-gotten and ordered returned to the government.

Senate Bill 1877

A counterpart Senate Bill 1877 is still being debated in the upper chamber. A consolidated bill has to be ratified by both chambers before being submitted for President Macapagal-Arroyo's signature.

Ilocos Norte Rep. Imee Marcos, the dictator's eldest daughter, was absent during the nominal voting.

She arrived after the voting was over and told Speaker Jose de Venecia that she was against the bill and would explain in writing tomorrow.

Bayan Muna Rep. Satur Ocampo, one of the principal authors of the bill, said he voted for the bill with reservations because the amendments were a "great variance" from the original bill.

He said the new bill watered down certain provisions in the original bill, making it difficult for claimants to get compensation.

His position was echoed by Selda, one of two organizations of rights victims laying claim to the recently recovered Marcos assets.

Selda, which had lobbied strongly for the compensation bill's passage, yesterday said it was now opposed to the measure.

Minuscule compensation

Selda secretary general Marie Hilao-Enriquez said the amended bills would make the victims wait "potentially forever for a potentially minuscule amount of compensation."

Negros Occidental Rep. Jacinto Paras, who voted against, said that while he commiserated with the rights abuse victims, the funds to compensate them should come from the personal assets or properties of the Marcoses and not from the state.

"It was Marcos who committed crime against these people, not the government. The money, under our law, should go to agrarian reform which failed for lack of money. Now that we have money, we're taking this out. We're creating another set of human rights victims who are the farmers," he said. *Cynthia D. Balana and Dona Pazzibugan*

'Walang iwanan' for FPJ voters, survey shows

"*WALANG iwanan*" may well be the battle cry of a big number of supporters of opposition presidential candidates Fernando Poe Jr. and Panfilo Lacson.

Results of a nationwide survey conducted by Social Weather Stations on Jan. 16-22 show that Poe and Lacson have the most committed supporters among the six presidential candidates.

More than half (58 percent) of those who indicated that they would vote for Poe at the start of the interview said that they would definitely not change their mind come the elections on May 10. Twenty percent said they had probably made up their mind while 22 percent said they could still easily change their mind.

Poe, the standard bearer of the Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino, was the choice for president of 36 percent of 1,200 statistically representative registered voters.

Of those rooting for Lacson, 48 percent were committed to voting for the opposition senator. Twenty percent said they had probably made up their mind to support the senator and 32 percent said they could still change their mind.

Lacson, the presidential candidate of a wing of the Laban ng Demokratikong Pilipino, was the choice for president of 11 percent of the respondents.

Poe and Lacson's core supporters as a percentage of their followers were bigger than the voters (46 percent) in general who said they would definitely not change their mind about their choice for president

New FPJ tormentor denies link to Mike A

By TJ Burgonio

"I DON'T know President Macapagal-Arroyo. I've never met the First Gentleman," disclosed lawyer Maria Jeanette C. Tecson.

Her revelation yesterday at a press forum in San Juan squelched speculations that Jose Miguel "Mike" Arroyo had a hand in the petition Tecson filed with the Supreme Court seeking disqualification of presidential candidate Fernando Poe Jr.

Tecson, however, admitted that Mr. Arroyo's secretary, Patricia Bunye, was a college friend and that the latter's husband, Jose Ferdinand Roxas II, was a founding member of Tecson's law firm.

"While we maintained our personal friendships with Atty. Roxas and his wife Atty. Bunye, it's on a purely personal level. We've never been involved in their politics," she added.

Tecson, who graduated from Ateneo de Manila University's College of Law in 1991 and passed the bar the following year, said Bunye was a college friend and two years her junior. Bunye's husband Atty. Roxas had resigned from their law firm in December 1999.

"That time, GMA was still vice president. There was no talk that she was going to assume the presidency," Tecson said.

She denied allegations by Poe's camp that their law firm was formed recently to file the petition against the actor. The firm has existed since 1995. They can check with the Securities and Exchange Commission, she said.

Since asking the high court to delete Poe's name from the candidates' list, Tecson has been hounded by allegations that Mr. Arroyo was behind her petition because of her supposed closeness to Bunye.

She denied speculations that she could be working with the camp of presidential candidate Sen. Panfilo "Ping" Lacson, who along with Poe is seeking the endorsement of the opposition as its standard-bearer.

Tecson said her main reason for filing the petition—which also named the Commission on Elections and lawyer Victorino Fornier as respondents—was to highlight the constitutional provision that says the Supreme Court is the "sole judge" of disqualification cases against presidential candidates.

"The Comelec has no jurisdiction. And when you have no jurisdiction, you have no business hearing the evidence," she said.

She also pointed out: "When the requirement being disputed is citizenship, the will of the electorate cannot supersede the qualification of citizenship. There are many Supreme Court cases that support this."

Angara wants travel ban for Manapat

By Christine O. Avendaño

OPPOSITION Sen. Edgardo Angara yesterday asked the Bureau of Immigration to put former National Archives chief Ricardo Manapat on its watch list apparently to prevent the latter from fleeing the country.

In a letter to Immigration Commissioner Alipio Fernandez, Angara requested Manapat to be placed in the BI watch list "without delay," reminding him that the latter was facing criminal and administrative charges.

Manapat has been charged before the ombudsman's office as well as in regional trial courts in Pasay City and Manila with allegedly fabricating Archive documents to make it appear that opposition standard bearer Fernando Poe Jr., was not a natural-born Filipino.

"And his physical presence is crucial to arriving at the truth as to the veracity of these charges," Angara told Fernandez.

Meanwhile, Sen. Vicente Sotto III scoffed at Rep. Prospero Pichay's statement that the opposition "stage managed" the testimony of two witnesses in the just concluded Senate inquiry looking into Manapat's alleged fabrication of documents against Poe.

Tancangco charged with graft

By Martin Marfil

THE NATIONAL Movement for Free Elections lost no time in formally accusing recently retired election commissioner Luzviminda Tancangco of graft, saying that the official was guilty of "gross inexcusable negligence" when she failed to implement the modernization program during her six-year tenure.

In a 20-page complaint affidavit filed by Namfrel executives Guillermo Luz, Augusto Lagman and former executive director Telibert Laoc on Jan. 28 before the Office of the Ombudsman, Tancangco was charged with violating Section 3(e) of the anti-graft and corrupt practices act.

Under the law, any public officer who causes undue injury to any party or the government or giving any private party unwarranted benefits, advantage or preference in the discharge of his official functions.

The complaint was based on the supposedly anomalous circumstances surrounding the public bidding for the Voters Registration and Identification System or VRIS project and for failing to automate the May 2001 elections.

TheVRIS project was awarded by the Commission on Elections to Photokina Marketing Corp. which submitted the lowest bid of P6.6 billion.

On Sept. 26, the commission allocated P1.2 billion for the project despite the "vast discrepancy" between the allocated budget and the winning bid.

The contract was then nullified by the Supreme Court which said that the winning bid of P6.6 billion was way beyond the amount appropriated by law for it.

According to a press statement issued yesterday by Namfrel, Tancangco, as chair of the modernization committee, should have rejected the Photokina bid for being excessive or should have withdrawn the notice of awards.

"Because of Tancangco's inexplicable fixation on the VRIS project, the Comelec was not able to cause the automation of the counting of votes in the May 2001 elections," the election watchdog group said.

ISH PASTORAL COUNCIL FOR RESPONSIBLE
BOTO KO, DANGAL KO IPAGTATANGGOL KO!

FOR RESPONSIBLE VOTING

Leaders of the Parish Pastoral Council for Responsible Voting display their slogan during a press conference marking the council's accreditation by the Commission on Elections as its citizens arm nationwide for the May 10 elections. They are (from left) Bro. Clifford Sorita, secretary general Ed Tamayo, Bayani Valenzuela, founding chair Henrietta de Villa, youth chair Melchor David and national chair Antonio Ventosa. ERIK ARAZAS

Mercado, Quezon join Inquirer as columnists

From page A1

al writer of another newspaper.

Mercado's column, called "Viewpoint," will appear in the INQUIRER twice a week. Quezon's column, "The Long View," will also be published twice a week.

Mercado holds the degree of Bachelor of Arts from San Carlos University in Cebu and did postgraduate studies at the Ateneo de Manila and the American Press Institute at Columbia University. He was a Kissinger Fellow at Harvard University.

He started his career in journalism as a reporter at the Southern Star in Cebu City in 1952 and later became its associate editor. He was the Senate reporter, then associate editor, of the Evening News in 1957-1966.

Mercado was a features writer of the Philippine News Service from 1967 to 1972. He was the Manila correspondent of the Financial Times of London, the Star Bulletin of Honolulu and the Bulletin of Sydney.

He was a founding director of the Philippine Press Institute from 1967 to 1972. He was a director of the Press Foundation of Asia in 1969 and now represents it in the board of trustees of the Philippine Press Institute.

Two years after he was detained upon the proclamation of martial law, he was allowed to leave and join the United Nations. He served as communications officer in Bangkok, Thailand from 1975 to 1984 and 1987-94, and attaché de cabinet in Rome of the Food and Agriculture Organization from 1985 to 1986.

After retiring from the United Nations, Mercado resumed his work in journalism as editorial writer of the Cebu Daily News and columnist of DEPTHnews and SunStar Cebu. He was Journalist of the Year awardee of the Manila Rotary Club in 1968 and University of San Carlos Alumnus Awardee for Journalism in 1970.

Quezon was editorial writer of the Philippines Free Press and later, its assistant managing editor. He has also written for Pinoy Times, Philippine Post (California), Pen & Ink, Taipan, Bond, Internet World, Mega and In Style magazines and Business Revue Southeast Asia and Banking and Finance Digest, among other publications.

He was a columnist and editorial writer of Today newspaper for about nine years.

Quezon has contributed articles to several books and anthologies. In 2001 he edited and produced "20 Speeches that Moved a Nation," a 5-CD audio series and book.

In 1996-97 he was a consultant at the office of then Sen. Raul S. Roco. He was a speechwriter of President Macapagal-Arroyo when she was senator and later, when she was Vice President. He was a technical assistant at the Office of the President and consultant of the Presidential Museum. He resigned his post in the government upon joining the INQUIRER as a columnist.

Quezon won honorable mention in the short story category of the 1994 Students' Literary Contest in UP Diliman, a special prize for non-literary writing in the Philippines Free Press Literary Awards in 1998 and the first prize for Essay in English in the Palanca Awards in 1997. He was a monthly winner of the LRP Journalism Awards in July 1998. He won the Opinion Writer of the Year Award of the Rotary Club of Manila Journalism Awards in 1995.

QUEZON

MERCADO

Supreme Court scolds Nani's . . .

From page A1

years; Silvestre Atienza, a second year law student at the Manuel L. Quezon University (MLQU) and office manager at Balgos and Perez; Ronan Garvida, Erwin Tan, Randy Iñigo, James Bugain and Allan Guiapal, all fraternity brothers of De Guzman; and Ronald Callado, most illustrious brother of Beta Sigma Lambda.

Committee of retired justices

The NBI was also directed to investigate how De Guzman was able to get a copy of the Supreme Court's Computer-Assisted Legal Research (CLAR) database.

The Supreme Court resolution came about five months after the Sept. 21, 2003 Mercantile Law exam. The resolution was based on the findings of a committee formed by the court to look into the matter after rumors of the leakage surfaced.

The committee was composed of retired Supreme Court Justice Carolina C. Grino-Aquino as chair and retired Supreme Court Justices Jose A. R. Melo and Vicente V. Mendoza as members. The committee submitted its findings to the high court on Jan. 15, 2004.

BALGOS: Mercantile Law examiner.

In adopting the report of the committee, the Supreme Court said De Guzman was morally unfit to continue as a member of the legal profession for grave dishonesty, lack of integrity and criminal behavior.

Root cause

The tribunal said Balgos, who admitted he was unfamiliar with the use of a computer, should "have prepared the test questions on his trusty typewriter, in the privacy of his home (instead of his law office) where they would have been safe from the prying eyes of secretaries and assistant attorneys."

The Supreme Court added that Balgos' negligence was "not the proximate cause of the 'bar leakage'; it was, in fact, the root cause."

The high court said that when De Guzman downloaded the test questions in Mercantile Law from Balgos' computer without Balgos' knowledge and permission, it amounted to a criminal act of larceny.

Theft

"It was theft of intellectual property; the test questions were intellectual property of Attorney Balgos, being the product of his intellectual and legal knowledge," the Supreme Court said.

De Guzman also violated Balgos' right to privacy of communication and right to security of his papers and effects against unauthorized search and seizure, which are protected by the Constitution, the high court said.

"He (De Guzman) transgressed the very first canon of lawyers' Code of Professional Responsibility which provides that '(a) lawyer shall uphold the Constitution, obey the laws of the land, and promote respect for law and legal processes.'"

By giving the stolen test questions to his fraternity brothers, De Guzman "abetted cheating or dishonesty by his fraternity brothers in the examination" in violation of the Code of Professional Responsibility, the court said. It added that De Guzman was guilty of grave misconduct unbecoming a member of the bar.

Three sets

The committee's investigation also revealed that Balgos prepared on his personal computer in his office three sets of test questions on Mercantile Law. Not knowing how to prepare the questionnaire in final form and how to print it, he asked Palma to accomplish the task for him.

Balgos testified before the committee that he thought he had sole access to his computer. When the leak was reported in media, he said he was surprised to discover that his computer was interconnected with the other computers of his assistant lawyers in the firm.

De Guzman admitted that in May 2003, he found and downloaded from Balgos' computer 12 pages of test questions in Mercantile Law. He said the questions looked like "quizzers for a book" that Balgos might be preparing. De Guzman said he saved the questions in the hard disk of his computer.

Faxed questions

On Sept. 17, 2003, De Guzman faxed the questions to fraternity brother Garvida, also a law graduate from FEU. De Guzman advised Garvida to share the questions with their fraternity brothers who were taking the bar exams. In turn, Garvida faxed the questions to Iñigo and Bugain. Iñigo passed a copy of the questions to Guiapal, who gave a copy to Collado.

Collado ordered the printing of the questions, with the logo and initials of the fraternity, and distributed copies to the MLQU's 30 bar candidates.

The Supreme Court noted that the investigation committee found that 82 percent of the questions asked in the Mercantile Law exam were leaked by De Guzman.

Nullify exam

De Guzman joined the Balgos and Perez Law Office in April 2002. He graduated from the FEU in 1998 and passed the bar with a grade of 86.4 percent. As a member of his fraternity in FEU, he was active during its "bar ops."

A day after the exam in Mercantile Law, Justice Jose Vitug, chair of the 2003 Bar Examinations Committee, was informed of the leak in the exam. On Sept. 23, the high court adopted Vitug's recommendation to nullify the exam in Mercantile Law.

The high court ordered that another examination be given for the same subject. But it later recalled the order. On Oct. 7, it readjusted the allocation of 15 percentage points for the Mercantile Law exam to those of the seven other bar exam subjects.

More than 5,400 law graduates took the 2003 bar examinations at the De La Salle University starting Sept. 7.

Jailed cop real hero . . .

From page A1

awarded the Medal of Valor to the wrong person. The medal was supposed to go to the officer who fought around 150 Moro rebels during a raid in Siocon town in Zamboanga del Norte nine months ago.

Senior Supt. Joel Goltiao, PNP spokesperson, said the "real hero" might have been PO1 Jamaron Sandag, a member of the elite Special Action Force, who was then being held at the Siocon jail.

Sandag begged prison guards to free him and allow him to fight at the height of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front's siege of Siocon shortly after midnight on May 4 last year, Goltiao said. The policeman was awaiting his release at the time of the attack.

His request granted, Sandag took a rifle and charged at the rebels who, by their sheer number, were expecting easy victory, Goltiao said. He fought until he and a small band of municipal policemen successfully drove away the attackers at sunrise.

Sandag's heroism, however, never caught the attention of the PNP leadership until months later when Siocon Mayor Cesar Soriano came forward to tell what really happened, Goltiao said.

Director General Hermogenes Ebdane Jr., PNP chief, was set to award Sandag a medal for bravery after the reenactment of his role in the Siocon raid yesterday.

Also a hero

Even with the late discovery, Goltiao said the PNP would not recall the Medal of Valor it gave to Chief Insp. Ranue Hachuela during the Independence Day rites held at PNP headquarters in Camp Crame, Quezon City, last year.

"He's also a hero who played a key role in driving away the enemy," the spokesperson said.

Hachuela led a 15-man team that rescued Mayor Soriano and his family during the nine-hour gun battle. He lost six men before Army reinforcements arrived.

Hachuela was only one of four officers who have so far received the Medal of Valor, a recognition that gave him a monthly gratuity of P20,000 for the rest of his life.

His dependents were also given scholarship grants, medical benefits, and hiring priority in case they decide to work in government.

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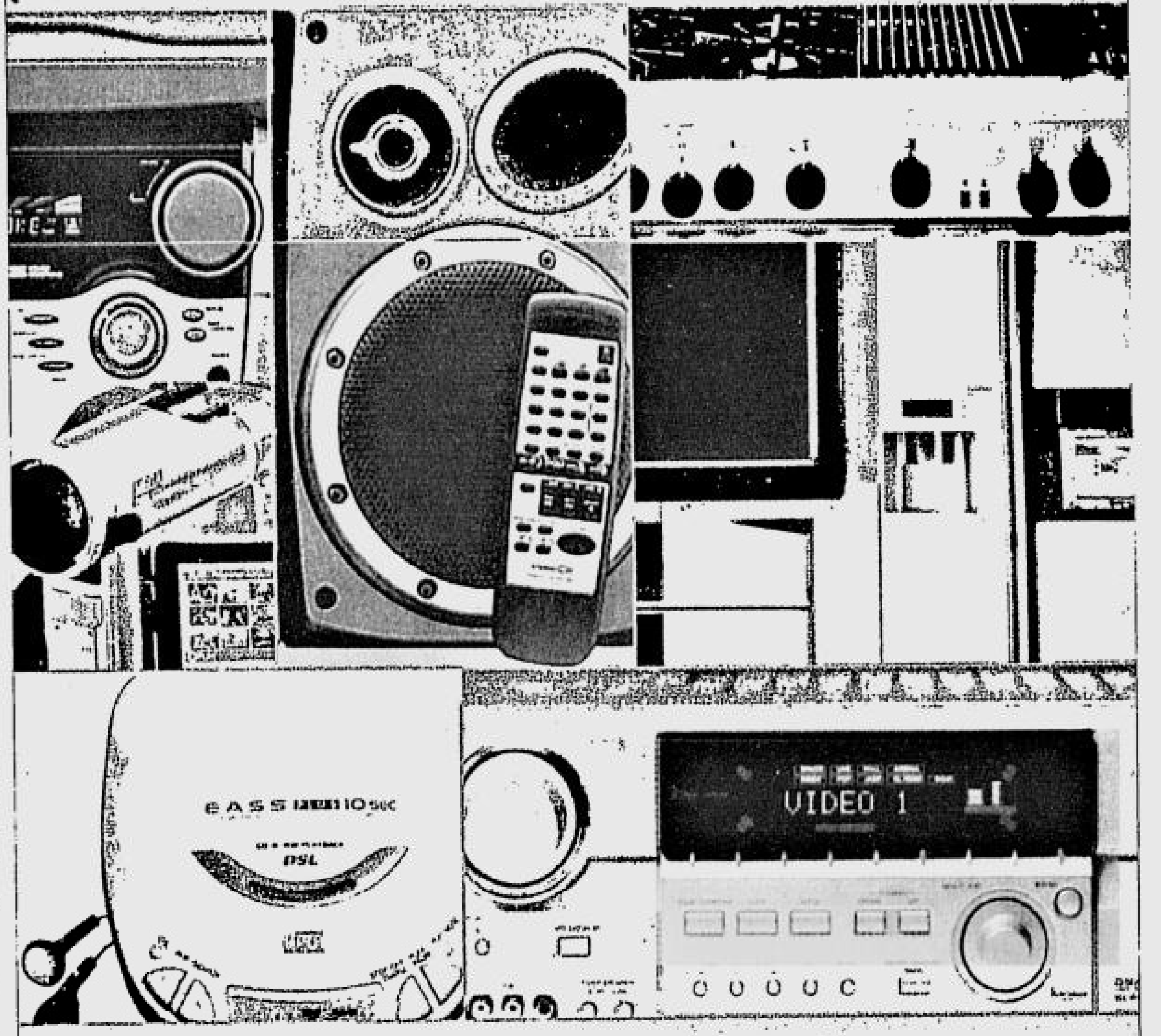

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FPJ proud of son by another woman

From page A1

Poe's running mate, Sen. Loren Legarda, said she knew about the actor's illegitimate son even before he informed her.

She said the matter should not be used as an issue against him.

"It's not an issue to me because every person has his past," she said. "It's always a blessing to have a child."

Rod Reyes, chief of Poe's media bureau, said the actor's public acknowledgement of his son was apparently in keeping with his objective of building an administration of transparency.

Battle for spin

Predictably, a battle for spin has ensued between administration and opposition politicians.

Poe's allies hailed his public disclosure, saying it would earn "good points" for him.

"It will clear the air of nasty rumors," Sen. Vicente Sotto III, Poe's campaign spokesman, told reporters at the Senate.

According to Sotto, Filipinos in general dislike a person who has an illegitimate child but who will not take responsibility for or denies or rejects the child.

He said people in local show biz looked up to Poe because of the latter's "up-front" nature.

But Rep. Raul Gonzalez (Lakas, Iloilo City) said Poe's admission had shattered his carefully cultivated image: "He's not so clean, after all."

Rep. Prospero Nograles (Lakas, Davao City) treaded cautiously, saying: "Sometimes the truth hurts. It can hurt Poe's real family; it can hurt his politics."

Asked to explain, Nograles said: "There are people who will appreciate Poe's admission as a sign of honesty, and there are people who will not take it kindly that he has children outside marriage."

Nothing personal

Malacañang refused to fuel the potential controversy.

Ignacio Bunye, spokesperson for President Macapagal-Arroyo, let out a laugh when asked in an RMN interview about the matter. But he quickly recovered and said Ms Macapagal would not dwell on the personal issues of other candidates.

"That is a personal circumstance, and the President will not be a part of any criticism on the shortcomings of the other candidates. She prefers to concentrate on the positive because we will get nowhere if mudslinging will prevail," he said.

Bunye said Ms Macapagal would instead push for her scholarship program, access to clean water, propagation of hybrid rice to boost food sufficiency, and other priority projects for the poor.

Political maturity

He refused to respond when asked at a briefing if the President would consider divorcing her husband, Jose Miguel Arroyo, in view of the latter's constant brushes with controversy.

Bunye reiterated Malacañang's appeal to all candidates to raise the quality of the campaign to the level of issues and platform of government.

"It is our obligation to the people to elevate the level of our political maturity," he said in a Radyo ng Bayan interview. "If we remain in this low level of maturity, it will not be good for our democracy. As they say, we deserve the leaders that we elect."

Nothing to hide

KNP senatorial candidates Didagen Dilangalen and Salvador Escudero said Filipinos loved the kind of candor that Poe had displayed.

"This is the kind of leader Filipinos are looking for—one who is not afraid of the truth," said Dilangalen, representative of Maguindanao.

Escudero, who spoke through his son Rep. Francis Escudero (NPC, Sorsogon), said: "This shows that FPJ has nothing to hide, especially now that he has entered the field of politics."

But Rep. Prospero Pichay Jr. (Lakas, Surigao del Sur) challenged Poe to push the envelope and address speculation that he had other children by other women.

Pichay, however, dismissed Poe's acknowledgement of his son as a "non-issue."

"This is not what the people want to know about him," the lawmaker said. "It's his platform that the people want to hear. And the biggest issue here is how he plans to govern if ever he wins."

Commended for honesty

The party-list women's group Gabriela commended Poe for his "honesty" but urged him to display the same candor in dealing with such issues as his program of government and his association with ousted President Joseph Estrada and businessman Eduardo "Danding" Cojuangco.

"We believe that honesty, transparency and the assumption of responsibility are very important traits that a good leader must have. We appreciate his candidness on this particular aspect of his personal life," said Gabriela president and first nominee Liza Maza.

"But more importantly, Mr. Poe should realize that we expect the same transparency and honesty to the nation in his dealings with ... Estrada, the Marcoses and Danding Cojuangco," said Maza, who previously represented Bayan Muna in the House.

Maza also said Gabriela was looking forward to hearing Poe's platform of governance and program of action for women.

Poe, as well as other presidential candidates Raul Roco and Eddie Villanueva, has been invited to Gabriela's proclamation of nominees and citywide convention on Saturday at the San Andres Sports Complex in Manila.

Extra-curriculars

Another party-list representative, Kim Bernardo-Lokin of the Citizens' Battle Against Corruption (Cibac), called on candidates for president and vice president to follow Poe's lead and declare their "extra-curricular activities."

Cibac spearheaded the "Report-A-Mistress" campaign in the House.

Lokin said the candidates should make these disclosures to apprise the people of their past and present. She said the people should know who among the candidates had extended families so that their transactions in government could be properly monitored.

Extended family

"Remember the ... time of President Joseph Estrada?" Lokin said. "If one of [these candidates] become president, chances are the plum contracts will go to the extended family."

Asked if it was bad to have a president with illegitimate children, Lokin said: "Not necessarily. But we should know how [candidates] intend to take care of the children financially, and what role these children will play if the candidate becomes president." *Reports from Dennis Jay C. Santos, PDI Mindanao Bureau; Carlito Pablo, Juliet Labog-Javellana, Christine O. Avendaño and Cynthia D. Balana in Manila*

Susan stands by her man

From page A1

ANA MARIN GMA TV GRAB

honesty is very important. Especially when it concerns a child," the actress said during the launching of the monthlong "Cinema Paraiso 2" festival in Intramuros.

But when asked if she has a close relationship with the young Poe, Roces' smile was vanished. She evaded the question.

"I would appreciate very much if you don't prod me to tell details. Perhaps you might ask them," she said.

Dressed in a blue, beaded pantsuit, Roces arrived at the National Commission for Culture and the Arts building in Intramuros at 6 p.m. and faced the press and openly talked about her husband's 22-year-old love child, Ron-An (pronounced Ron-yan).

The young Poe is an advertising student in De La Salle University on Taft Avenue.

"He admitted this because it's the truth," said Roces of her husband of 35 years. "This is part of a chapter in our lives that we've long closed already."

Don't add to the hurt

She added: "With due respect to the innocent parties, my daughter Grace and Ron-An, we do not wish to add additional hurt. Mr. Poe has already made his statement and I guess it's only proper that I don't add anything further."

The famous movie couple, who were married in 1968, are childless and adopted Mary Grace, now married and living in the United States.

In a television interview by journalist Jessica Soho in GMA 7, Poe popularly known by his initials, FPJ, standard-bearer of the opposition Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino in the May elections, had looked the journalist in the eye when asked the question about his son by Marin and quickly said yes.

It was the first public acknowledgement of his son.

Not close

A source close to the couple said Roces was not close to Poe's son. "I'm sure you understand why," the source said. "But the boy is very close to his father."

The source added that the young Poe was a spitting image of his father, "In fact, he's a little Ronnie."

Ron-an used to visit his father on the set of his movies, according to the source.

The young Poe has also received several movie offers but declined, said the source. "I think he prefers doing commercials because he's taking up advertising," the source added.

Honorable man

Former Movie and Television Review and Classification Board chief Armida Siguion-Reyna said she was not surprised when she heard Poe talk about his son on television.

"I expect that from a man who is honorable," Siguion-Reyna said. "FPJ is a good man. *Alam na namin ang sikretong yan noon pa.*" (We have long known of that secret.)

Siguion-Reyna said he met Ron-an when he was 4 years old.

Poe's senatorial candidate actress Boots Anson-Roa is confident that the public will continue supporting FPJ even after he admitted having a child out of wedlock.

It's between Ronnie, Susan

"This is an issue that Ronnie and Susan have settled between themselves," Anson-Roa pointed out. "He would even gain the sympathy of the people for being so honest about his weakness."

ALL'S well between Senators Loren Legarda and Noli de Castro. But that was then—during the opening of the 12th Congress on Jan. 12.

PDI PHOTO FILE

Loren takes swipe at Noli as a man 'without a brain'

From page A1

bills of national importance since she became a senator six years ago, and that 12 of these bills had been passed into law.

The other bills are still pending because of the "tedious process" of legislation, she said.

Wedding sponsor

In Manila, De Castro told the INQUIRER that he preferred to withhold comment.

"Ayaw kong umiinit ang isyu (I don't want the issue to turn into a controversy)," he said.

Anyway, he added, *"makikita naman sa Mayo 10 kung sino ang gusto ng tao* (it will be seen on May 10 exactly who the people want)."

De Castro—whom recent surveys had identified as the front-runner in the vice presidential race, also said he would rather not react to Legarda's statement because she was scheduled to stand as a sponsor at the wedding on Sunday of his daughter Katherine, a news anchor at ABS-CBN.

"Loren was our choice to be one of the godmothers," he said in reference to his wife Arlene. *Reports from Aquiles Z. Zonio of the PDI Mindanao Bureau and Christine O. Avendaño in Manila*

GMA: Argentina extreme scenario for RP

From page A1

The peso on Tuesday traded near its all-time low of 56.22 to the US dollar before finishing at 56.20. The peso yesterday closed at the Philippine Dealing System at 56.16 to the greenback—thanks to a $20-million intervention by the BSP and a warning to currency speculators by Ms Macapagal.

Local stocks also rose for the first time in six days on Wednesday, but analysts said the gains were tempered by lingering political uncertainties and weakness in the local currency. The main index closed 3.45 points or 0.24 percent higher at 1,441.12 points.

No sense

"Our economy is sound and strong, there is absolutely no sense in extreme scenarios," Ms Macapagal said in a statement.

A Jan. 29 study by SCB's chief economist for Southeast Asia Steve Brice noted that while the economic outlook for the Philippines remained positive, the state of its public finances had been deteriorating significantly, its external position fragile and political situation uncertain.

The SCB study stressed that even though Manila had met its 2003 fiscal targets, its foreign debt situation "continues to deteriorate slowly," making it "increasingly vulnerable to external shocks."

It noted that tax and duty collections had gone down (15 percent of gross domestic product in 2003 compared to 19 percent in 1997) and that the public sector borrowing requirement had risen to 50 percent more than the reported budget deficit.

Vicious circle

"There is evidence of a vicious circle emerging, with almost half of government revenues being used to service the debt," the SCB study said.

Buenaventura said a government mismanagement of the economy may bring about a debt and fiscal crises.

"We will be in a fiscal and debt crises if we do not address our revenue problems in two to three years. We need (to impose) new taxes and to improve our tax collection. We also have to eliminate smuggling. All these require political will which hopefully will come with a new mandate to whoever is elected as president," Buenaventura said in a text message.

Budget deficit

Former Finance Secretary Jose Isidro Camacho admitted last December that the country was already suffering from a fiscal crisis due to the failure of Congress to enact crucial revenue measures. The country's budget deficit had been increasing each year since 1998 and last year, it stood at a hefty P199.86 billion.

Even so, BSP Deputy Governor Amando Tetangco Jr. said it would be "rather farfetched" to compare the Philippines, which has $56 billion in mostly medium and long-term debts, with Argentina, which defaulted on $88 billion in mostly short-term debts in 2002.

Corazon Guidote, executive director of the country's Investor Relations Office, said that unlike Argentina, the Philippines was doing a good job in managing its foreign debt.

Warning to speculators

In reference to last week's failed destabilization plot, Ms Macapagal said "the transitory pressure on the peso is coming from perceptions of instability fueled by isolated military adventurism and excessive politicking."

"We can all help by staying calm and focusing on constructive economic endeavors," she said in her statement.

The President also renewed her warning to currency speculators, hoarders and profiteers, saying the government was ready to throw the book at individuals or groups that have launched an attack on the local currency.

BSP officials said the central bank was prepared to adopt appropriate monetary policy measures in view of the peso's weakness.

"We will continue to monitor the impact of exchange rate movements on future inflation. If the inflation target is at risk, we will have to take appropriate measures," said BSP Deputy Governor Amando Tetangco.

Monetary authorities could either raise interest rates or increase banks' reserve requirements to mop up excess liquidity feared to be used in currency speculation.

Forex transactions

On Tuesday, the central bank said foreign exchange transactions of banks were being scrutinized ahead of the May elections. Banks stand to lose their forex trading licenses after three major violations, although there have been no evidence yet to suggest they have engaged in speculative trading, officials said.

Ms Macapagal said she was concerned that the peso's depreciation could have an adverse impact on the average Filipino in the form of rising prices of basic commodities.

She ordered the Department of Trade and Industry and Department of Agriculture to work closely with local government units in monitoring prices of goods.

She has also directed the Land Transport Franchising and Regulatory Board to negotiate with transport groups to hold off any increase in fare hikes in the face of higher oil prices.

"We hope that a common ground is reached that will be the best interest of the transport industry and commuters," she said.

Poe's assurance

Popular actor Fernando Poe Jr., the front-runner in the May 10 presidential election, has assured skittish investors that experienced advisers are working on drafting his still unrevealed economic program.

With a week to go before the start of formal campaigning, Poe, 64, a high-school dropout with no record of public service, tried to allay concerns he was unqualified to be president.

Asked in an interview with GMA 7 late Tuesday about accusations he had no economic platform, Poe answered: "I have an economic team. All the hard questions, the tough problems, how to solve that, they are helping me." He did not identify the members of his economic team or discuss the outline of his economic program.

Poe, a close friend of deposed President Joseph Estrada, holds a nine percentage-point lead over Ms Macapagal in national voter preference surveys.

Credit rating

In the past week, the Philippines has suffered a credit rating downgrade, the local currency has dived to an all-time low against the dollar, and the stock markets suffered steep falls amid political uncertainty ahead of the balloting.

In the interview, Poe again brushed aside allegations he was a political puppet. "That is not true. Those who say that don't know who I am."

Concerns over his perceived lack of experience and his failure to expound on an economic agenda for his presidency have rattled the financial markets.

In a stinging rebuke to Poe, he failed to get a single vote in a survey of presidential choices of the influential Makati Business Club last month. Ms Macapagal came out on top, chosen by 47 percent of the respondents.

Call of the people

Reacting to this, Poe said: "If their confidence in me is lacking (they should remember that) the people's confidence is lacking in our government."

"My platform is not just for them but for the people. That is what I would tell them," he added.

He said he was standing for president in response to "the call of the people."

"I cannot turn my back on them. Whenever I toured the provinces, I saw that they really needed help ... They need a change in our government so they will believe in it once more," he said.

Experience

Asked about his qualifications, Poe cited his experience in being an actor for more than 40 years. "I have gone to the squatters, the poor, the mountains, all the nooks and crannies [of the country]. I have seen what is really happening."

In an apparent reference to his upper-class critics, Poe remarked that "some people do not really see what is happening. The problems [they cite], they are not what (Filipinos) are thinking of. They are thinking of what they will eat today and what they will eat tomorrow." *With a report from AFP*

Unicef hails RP for anti-measles campaign

By Blanche S. Rivera

CEBU CITY—The United Nations Children's Fund (Unicef) yesterday hailed the Philippines as the first country in Asia and "one of the very few in the world" to aim for the elimination of measles, a major killer among children worldwide.

Unicef officials, who joined the provincial launching of the Ligtas Tigdas 2004 campaign here yesterday, expressed confidence that with 120,000 health workers deployed all over the country this month, the target of immunizing 18 million children could be reached.

"The strategy for the elimination of measles is exemplary," Unicef health and nutrition division chief Romanus Mkeremga said in an interview at the Mambaling Sports Complex, where Health Secretary Manuel Dayrit gave ceremonial booster shots to 15 Badjao children.

"The Philippines is one of the first countries in the world trying to eliminate measles. This is not typical because in many countries, they are just controlling it," Mkeremga added.

While measles control in Asia remains "poor," the Philippines has become a leader in combating the virus because of national and local government support. The amount of P1 billion has been allocated for the month-long anti-measles campaign.

In the 1980s, between 5,000 to 12,000 children died of measles every year. This was brought down to 1,000 to 3,500 fatalities in the 1990s. From 1998 to 2002, there were only 350 deaths from measles every year.

The Department of Health, working with local governments, has deployed 40,000 teams of barangay health workers who would be stationed in health centers or who would go door-to-door to immunize children.

Dayrit said the main obstacle that workers, dubbed as *bakunadoors,*

face is if cultural minority groups would accept the concept of vaccination.

He cited the aetas of Zambales and some indigenous tribes in Mindanao as challenges to the campaign. The chances of a measles epidemic breaking out among tribal groups are high because of the low immunization rate among the children.

Undersecretary for Mindanao Milagros Fernandez said that there were four deaths yesterday in the B'laan indigenous community in Simsiman, Nurallah in Cotabato, apparently due to a measles epidemic.

The DOH has sent a team of five people to verify the reports and to check the situation in the far-flung territory.

The Japanese government has granted $7.8 million for the Ligtas Tigdas 2004 campaign, which seeks to immunize 18 million children aged nine months to

below eight years old.

The Philippines is the first Asian country to launch the program, which will run until Feb. 29. Malaysia, Indonesia and Thailand are set to follow within the year, the Unicef said.

"I urge you not to lose your momentum, not to lose your interest. Let us help the Philippines achieve the success story that it needs in public health," Unicef representative to the Philippines Nicholas Alipui said during a press briefing at the DOH regional office in Central Visayas.

The DOH is also giving free vitamin A to children who are immunized, citing studies that show measles as a major cause of blindness among kids.

Dick heads Red Cross

GORDON

FORMER Tourism Secretary Richard Gordon is the new chair of the Philippine National Red Cross (PNRC). Gordon took over Brig. Gen. Jaime Canatoy who served as chair for the past two years.

Gordon, a member of the PNRC board of governors since 1985, was elected during the board meeting on Jan. 29 at the PNRC headquarters.

Gordon chairs the PNRC Millennium Partners, a fund-raising program of the Red Cross, which so far has donated P21 million since it started in 2000.

Other newly elected officers were former National Security Adviser Roilo Golez as vice chair; Lourdes Casas Quezon, secretary; Victor Agbayani, assistant secretary; Leonida "Baby" Ortiz, treasurer; Allan Lee, assistant treasurer, and Lorna Kapunan, counselor.

Gordon and the rest of the PNRC officers will serve a two-year term.

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CONSPIRATOR? During a press conference on Tuesday, Boy Saycon answers charges of conspiring with a group of military officers in a destabilization plot against the government. EPA

DEFACED flag is presented by Baltazar Asadon (extreme right), also known as "Captain Gabay," to from left, NBI agent Marianito Panganiban, Deputy Director Nestor Mantaring and Assistant Director Lolito Utitco. ERIK ARAZAS

"CAPTAIN GABAY," alleged spokesperson of "Kawal," points to Boy Saycon as the man behind the menacing Kawal press conference on Jan. 26. ERIK ARAZAS

'Kawal spokesman' surrenders, tags Saycon

From page A1

called for the resignation of Defense Secretary Eduardo Ermita.

Asadon said he was coached to introduce himself as "Captain Gabay" for the press conference.

Baltazar was among those charged with disrespect for the flag for using two Philippine flags joined together that bore the word "*kawal* (soldier)" during the press conference.

Also charged were Saycon and Army Captains Peter Edwin Navarro, Rembert Baylosis, Philip Esmeralda, Marcos Serafica and Mohammad Yusop Hassan. Serafica and Hassan are set to turn state witness. The group is also set to be charged with inciting to sedition.

Drop charges

Marianito Panganiban, chief of the NBI Special Task Force, said the agency would move to drop the charges filed against Asadon, who turned over the "defaced" Philippine flag to the NBI when he surrendered.

Saycon denied he forced Asadon to show up at the press conference where Asadon was joined by the five junior officers.

"How could I intimidate him when he was in the company of soldiers?" the Copa official said in a telephone interview.

Saycon claimed it was Asadon and the junior officers who had sought his help to arrange the press conference at a rented house near the Copa official's property at the Ayala Alabang Subdivision in Muntinlupa.

Replied to media questions

Asadon, he said, could not have acted under duress because he talked to Arnold Clavio of GMA 7, Fe Zamora of Inq7.net, and Manny Mogato of Reuters throughout the press conference.

"He graciously answered questions from the three reporters for about one hour. So how could he now say that he had been forced?" Saycon said.

Saycon claimed he did not even know Asadon's real identity.

When presented to the media yesterday, Asadon said he surrendered to the NBI's Special Task Force on Monday afternoon because he feared for his life.

Asked if Saycon could harm him, he said, "I believe he could do that."

Asadon said his family had been distraught by the recent turn of events, but he maintained that he would stand by his story. "I will face this as a man. I will stand by the truth," he said.

Recruitment

He said Saycon had asked him to recruit his lawyer friends to form a group that would support the candidacy of actor Fernando Poe Jr. and Sen. Loren Legarda, although none of his friends agreed.

Asadon said that as a member of the First Quadrant, he recruited his classmates at the FEU, some of whom belong to the military, to join the multi-level marketing scheme.

The businessman from Cavite also told investigators that he had met with his friends from the military even before the press conference. It was during one of these meetings when he was introduced to Saycon.

Saycon said he first met Asadon when the law student attended Copa's Christmas party last Dec. 22.

Commander Larry Andes, the man who purportedly brought Asadon and the junior military officers to the party, was scolded by Copa member Pedro Navarro, a retired police general, for taking the group to the party, Saycon claimed.

But Saycon theorized that Asadon might have made the accusation against him "under duress."

"We really can't tell what motivated him to implicate me," he said. "But I can't take it against him. Perhaps he was under intense pressure. I'll just let my lawyers handle the case."

Call signs

Panganiban quoted Asadon as saying that Navarro was present at the meetings of Saycon and Kawal Pilipino.

Panganiban said he learned from Asadon that Kawal Pilipino's call sign was "*gabay* (guide)," while Saycon's call sign was "*pag-asa* (hope)."

The initial call signs were "*kawal* (soldier)" for the military officers and "*umaasa* (hoping)" for Saycon, but these had to be changed after being discovered by other parties.

On the day of the press conference, Asadon said he was supposed to meet Captain Navarro, a son of the retired police general, at Glorietta. But before proceeding to the mall, he went to a Shell gasoline station in Makati and met with the young Navarro who was with the four other military captains.

Safe house

The group then went to the Glorietta mall and met Saycon, who told them to go to the parking lot. Together with Hassan, Asadon boarded Saycon's Pajero, while the four others boarded a Nissan Sentra car. The group proceeded to a heavily guarded house under construction at the Ayala Alabang village, which Saycon allegedly claimed was his safe house.

At the house, Asadon said Navarro gave him an undersized military uniform to wear, and when he hesitated was told by Navarro not to complain.

No turning back

Saycon also allegedly urged Asadon to wear the uniform.

"Wear it Bal. There's no more turning back. This is it. You will face the media and you will read this statement," Asadon quoted Saycon as telling him.

Wavering when handed the manifesto he was to read before the media, Asadon said Saycon virtually threatened him with harm.

"Don't complain if you want to go home alive," Saycon allegedly told the businessman.

During the press conference, Saycon allegedly gave the military officers the Philippine flag, which was later left on the table. Asadon took the flag and kept it. *With a report from Alcuin Papa*

Death ruling elates Chiongs, stuns convicts' kin

From page A1

a hospital and a school here, James Andrew Uy, Rowen Adlawan, Ariel Balansag and Alberto Cano.

Only James Anthony Uy, younger brother of James Andrew, was spared from the death penalty because he was only 16 at the time the crime was committed.

Fourteen justices voted in favor of the resolution. Chief Justice Hilario Davide Jr. did not take part in the voting because his wife is a relative of the Chiongs. Justice Adolf Azcuna was on official leave.

Thelma Chiong, now national vice president of the Crusade Against Violence, said her family would hold a Thanksgiving Mass on Saturday at the Queen City Memorial Gardens where Marijoy was buried.

Where's Jacqueline

"*Ganahan ko motan-aw sa hitsura nila inig kamatay nila kay ila mang gipatay ang akong mga anak, ila pang gipahimuslan* (I want to see their faces when they die because they did not only kill my daughters, they also raped them)," Chiong said.

She, however, said there was one thing she wanted from the convicts—to tell her where they hid the body of Jacqueline.

Jacqueline and Marijoy were waiting for a ride home when they were forced into a car at about 10 p.m. on July 16, 1997 at the Ayala Center Cebu.

The sisters were brought to a house in Barangay Guadalupe, Cebu City, where they were raped. Then they were brought to Sitio Tan-awan in Carcar town, about 40 km south of here, where they were again molested.

Marijoy's badly bruised body was found in a ravine in Sitio Tan-awan a day after the abduction. Jacqueline's body remains missing to this day.

Not the first time

By PDI Research

THIS IS not the first time that the Supreme Court modified a judgment of *reclusion perpetua* (life imprisonment) by a trial court and imposed the supreme penalty of death.

In March 1982, the Supreme Court en banc imposed death on Nolasco Famador.

Famador, then a 44-year-old policeman, was charged with the complex crime of abduction with rape before the Court of First Instance of Cebu City. He had lured a 15-year-old girl to go with him on the pretext that her sister was waiting on Junquera Street, Cebu City. He handcuffed and forced the victim into a taxicab, brought her to Cebu Normal School where he raped her.

The trial court found the accused guilty only of simple rape. Famador could not be convicted for abduction since the prosecution failed to establish the existence of lewd or unchaste design when he forcibly took the victim. The judge sentenced Famador to *reclusion perpetua*.

On review, the Supreme Court held that the crime committed by Famador was forcible abduction with rape, qualified by the use of a deadly weapon with aggravating circumstances—it was committed at night, there was abuse of official position, use of motor vehicle and deceit. The Supreme Court also ruled that lewd or unchaste design already existed when he forcibly took the young girl to rape her. Since the offense is a complex crime, the penalty for the more serious offense was imposed—death.

Judge kills self

Judge Ocampo convicted the seven and sentenced them to two life terms. They were spared the death penalty because of the age of some of the accused (below 21) and the poverty and lack of education of others.

The judge was later found dead in a hotel room in October 1999. The authorities later ruled that it was suicide and no foul play was involved.

Both the prosecution and the defense appealed Ocampo's decision to the Supreme Court. The prosecution demanded the death penalty while the defense asked that the seven be acquitted.

Crying relatives

The high court decision released Tuesday saddened the relatives of the seven convicts.

Marlyn Uy, mother of the Uy brothers, cried and asked lawyer Eric Carin to do everything to save her sons.

Carin said Ms Uy could not sleep on Tuesday night, after she learned about the Supreme Court ruling. "They are shocked and still grieving over this decision," he told the INQUIRER.

Marijoy (left) and elder sister Jacqueline CON FILE

Carin said the convicts could still ask the tribunal to reconsider its decision. He admitted that chances were slim for the Supreme Court to reverse itself on a motion for reconsideration.

Still, it was worth a try.

Osmeña cousin

Margarita Larrañaga, Paco's mother, refused to be interviewed.

She called up the guardhouse of Sto. Niño Village, in Barangay Banilad here yesterday and told the guards not to allow the media anywhere near her house.

One of the guards was instructed to tell the INQUIRER that the entire family was in Manila.

The decision was also difficult for Cebu City Mayor Tomas Osmeña, cousin of Margarita Larrañaga.

He said in a news conference that while he was saddened by the verdict, he had to accept the decision of the Supreme Court.

Leave it to God

Paco's friend Raymund Alvin Garcia was also dismayed by the ruling, maintaining that Paco was innocent of the charges.

Garcia, son of former Mayor Alvin Garcia, had testified in court that he, Paco and their other friends from Cebu were in a bar on Katipunan Avenue in Quezon City on July 16, 1997, the night the two sisters were abducted.

Garcia hoped that the Supreme Court would reverse its decision. "We will just leave it to God," he said.

JAMES ANTHONY UY

ARIEL "DODONG" BALANSAG

PACO LARRAÑAGA

ROWEN ADLAWAN

JOSMAN AZNAR PHOTOS BY VAL HANDUMON

The WORLD

Editor **Luverne B. Gueco**

Asia warned of more terror attacks

BALI—Additional terrorist attacks are "inevitable" in the Asia-Pacific region—where terrorists are actively training, recruiting and using "legitimate fronts to pursue barbaric ends," Australia's foreign minister said Wednesday at the opening of an antiterrorism conference on the bomb-scarred tourist island of Bali.

"Terrorist groups are cooperating across the region, transiting borders using one country to train in, another to raise funds in and another for safe haven. They are working together to maximize the impact of their activities," Alexander Downer said.

Combating the al-Qaida-linked Southeast Asian terror group Jemaah Islamiyah topped the agenda at the two-day regional conference attended by ministers and senior officials from 33 countries, including US Attorney General John Ashcroft.

"We have convened here in Bali to deepen our cooperation against those who oppose our shared values and those who would murder innocents," Ashcroft told reporters. "Through the cooperative efforts of countries represented at this ministerial meeting we will win the battle for freedom, we will win the battle for tolerance, we will win the battle to defeat terror."

The countries are expected to bolster coöperation in intelligence gathering and offer new anti-terror aid for developing countries like Indonesia.

It's unlikely they'll sign any comprehensive agreements that would enable them to move beyond the two-way pacts that have damaged Jemaah Islamiyah, but failed to defeat it. Critics say mutual suspicions have prevented the creation of region-wide mechanisms, such as a multinational police force.

Indonesian President Megawati Sukarnoputri told the conference delegates that "wider and more effective cooperation" has now become "our common duty."

"This solid coordination mechanism is necessary, for only in this way would we be able to penetrate into the terrorist network and cells that are neatly, tightly and closely built," she said.

Downer announced the opening of a transnational crime center in the Indonesian capital, Jakarta. Run jointly by Indonesia and Australia, it will offer antiterror training and be an information clearinghouse.

The center will foster anti-terrorism skills like "forensic training, strike forces, bomb disposal units and training, response training for sabotage and hostage-taking," said Bali's police chief, Inspector General I Made Mangku Pastika. *AP*

Labor backs Sharon's Gaza plan

JERUSALEM—The opposition Labor Party said Tuesday it will back Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's plan to dismantle Jewish settlements in Gaza, assuring him of a parliamentary majority even if ultranationalists quit Sharon's coalition in protest.

Sharon shrugged off the growing threats to his government, saying he is determined to go ahead with plans to remove 17 settlements in Gaza and three in the West Bank without waiting for a peace deal with the Palestinians. He said he would try to form a new governing coalition rather than back down.

The prime minister's surprise announcement Monday divided Israelis into two camps: those who believe Sharon, for decades the main architect of Jewish settlement expansion, is truly changing course; and those who suspect him of trying to sow confusion and deflect attention from a widening corruption probe against him.

Commentators said whatever Sharon's motives, his declaration has created irreversible facts, and no future prime minister could demand to hold on to parts of Gaza in a peace deal with the Palestinians. "The words that were uttered can never be taken back," commentator Dan Margalit wrote in the Maariv daily.

Opinion polls suggested that Sharon has broad public support for dismantling most Gaza settlements, increasingly seen by many Israelis as a security burden. Israel controls one-third of the strip, while 1.3 million Palestinians share the rest.

In his first public comment on the issue Tuesday, Sharon avoided mention of Gaza but said he was determined to press ahead with the removal of settlements. "Not only is this difficult for the settlers, but also, it is more painful for myself than anyone else in Israel," Sharon said during a visit of the coastal city of Ashkelon. *AP*

US Democratic presidential candidate Sen. John Kerry celebrates his primary victories during a rally in Seattle on Tuesday after taking a huge stride toward the presidential nomination with wins in five states, but victories by John Edwards and Wesley Clark kept the race alive. Beside him is wife Theresa. REUTERS

Death toll in Kurdish blast soars above 100

IRBIL, Iraq—The number of dead rose to 101 in the twin suicide bombings of two Kurdish political offices, the highest confirmed toll in any terrorist attack since the US invasion of Iraq.

Kurds blamed Ansar al-Islam, a militant group allegedly linked to Osama bin Laden's al-Qaida.

The string of insurgent attacks killed another American soldier Tuesday and came as UN Secretary General Kofi Annan met with US President George W. Bush and announced he'll send a team to Iraq to break an impasse between the US-led coalition and the Shiite Muslim clergy over how to transfer power to Iraqis.

In Baghdad, the US-led Coalition Provisional Authority put the death toll from Sunday's attacks against the offices of the Kurdistan Democratic Party and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan at 101, with 133 people still hospitalized.

The attacks—by bombers with explosives wired to their bodies—were the bloodiest since at least Aug. 29, when a vehicle bombing outside a Shiite mosque in Najaf killed more than 85 people. Some estimates have placed the Najaf death toll much higher.

The victims of the earlier attack included Shiite leader Ayatollah Mohammed Baqir al-Hakim.

Brig. Gen. Mark Kimmitt said the US investigation has not determined who was behind the attacks in Irbil, though he would not rule out either Ansar al-Islam or al-Qaida.

Kimmitt, deputy chief of staff for operations for the US military, also said there had been an average of 23 engagements each day over the past week between US forces and Iraqi insurgents, a slight increase over the figure of 18 reported last week.

One American soldier was killed and another was wounded Tuesday when a roadside bomb exploded during an operation to clear such weapons near Iskandariyah, 56 km south of Baghdad, the US command said. *AP*

US PRIMARIES

Kerry wins 5 states; Edwards, Clark stay alive

WASHINGTON—Democratic front-runner John Kerry took a huge stride toward the presidential nomination on Tuesday with wins in five states, but victories by John Edwards and Wesley Clark kept the race alive.

Kerry, riding a wave of momentum from back-to-back wins in the first two contests last month, won in Missouri, Arizona, Delaware, North Dakota and New Mexico as seven states voted on the biggest day yet in the race to find a challenger to President George W. Bush.

Edwards, a senator from North Carolina, and Clark, a retired general, scored wins in South Carolina and Oklahoma, respectively, throwing up at least temporary speed bumps on Kerry's cruise to the nomination.

Connecticut Sen. Joseph Lieberman, the Democratic nominee for vice president in 2000, was shut out on Tuesday and pulled out of the race, saying "the judgment of the voters is now clear."

Fallen front-runner Howard Dean also went zero-for-Tuesday, but put a brave face on his poor showing and promised to keep "going and going and going."

Kerry, the Massachusetts senator and decorated Vietnam veteran who had faced questions about whether he could compete nationwide, answered with strong finishes in seven states in the South, East, West and Midwest.

"Now we will carry this campaign and the cause of a stronger, fairer, more prosperous America to every part of America," Kerry said at a victory rally in Seattle.

"We will take nothing for granted, we will compete everywhere, and in November, we will beat George W. Bush," he said.

Clark, the former commander of Nato and a political novice, scored a narrow win over Edwards in Oklahoma, where he led by 1,300 votes with all precincts reporting.

"As an old soldier from Arkansas, I couldn't be prouder of your support in this first election I've ever won," Clark told supporters in Oklahoma City.

The double-digit victory by Edwards in South Carolina, which he labeled a must-win state, and his strong showing in Oklahoma boosted his argument he would provide the strongest opponent to Bush in rural areas and in the South.

"Tonight you said that the politics of lifting people up beats the politics of tearing people down," Edwards, who emphasized a positive message focused on the economy, told roaring supporters in downtown Columbia, South Carolina.

"Today we said clearly to the American people that in our country, in our America, everything is possible," Edwards said.

A total of 269 delegates to July's nominating convention were at stake in the seven states voting on Tuesday, with 2,162 needed to win the nomination. *Reuters*

WORLDBRIEFS

Int'l jurists urged to help in Saddam trial

NEW YORK—Any trial of Saddam Hussein should be conducted with the help of international jurists, who could help ensure that the proceedings are seen as fair and impartial, human rights lawyers said Tuesday. International legal experts speaking in New York at the Jacob Blaustein Institute for the Advancement of Human Rights agreed that ideally war crimes trials are best carried out in the countries where the alleged crimes took place. "It's very important the voices of Iraqi victims be heard," said Nina Bang-Jensen, the executive director of the Coalition for International Justice. But "Iraq—a country which changes dramatically from one month by month—has a lot on its plate right now." The experts warned that the court must be seen as impartial. *AP*

US, Libya officials set talks in London

WASHINGTON—US and Libyan officials will meet in London on Friday for talks expected to include the possibility of easing US economic sanctions and resuming an American diplomatic presence in Tripoli, US officials said. The meetings, which will include British officials, reflect Washington's desire to make some gestures to reward Libya for its Dec. 19 decision to give up its weapons of mass destruction program and its follow-through since then, officials said. The officials stressed that it could be some time before the vast array of US economic sanctions are removed or before the United States might open an embassy in Tripoli. But they said they wanted to open a "political dialogue" now. *Reuters*

Deadly poison at US Senate confirmed

WASHINGTON—US Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist said on Tuesday that the deadly poison ricin had been found in the mailroom of his office but people exposed to it so far had shown no signs of ill health. Capitol Police Chief Terrance Gainer said the FBI and the Joint Terrorism Task Force launched a criminal investigation after the powder was found Monday in the room in the Dirksen Senate Building, stirring memories of a 2001 anthrax attack on the Capitol. Gainer, in a news conference with Frist, said the powder was near an area where letters had been opened but it was unclear if the ricin had been in an envelope or a package, or whether it came through the mail at all. *Reuters*

17 dead in Turkey building collapse

KONYA, Turkey—Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan called for tougher laws on building codes Tuesday as rescuers scrambled to free dozens of people trapped inside a collapsed apartment building. Seventeen people have died. Between 40 and 100 people were believed trapped, officials said. Rescue teams were working around the clock for a second night in an operation that could take days. Authorities blamed the collapse on shoddy construction. Poor construction was also blamed for many of the 17,000 deaths in a 1999 earthquake. *AP*

Pakistan's Musharraf faces tough nuclear choices

ISLAMABAD—Now that President Pervez Musharraf has exposed one of the greatest nuclear proliferation scandals in history, the question gripping Pakistan is who will take the blame.

The general, who took power in a 1999 military coup, has already said the government and army were not involved in the sale of nuclear technology to Libya and two "axis of evil" countries, Iran and North Korea.

Instead, he has blamed scientists acting for personal gain.

Last week, the mastermind of Pakistan's nuclear program, Abdul Qadeer Khan, was sacked as adviser to the prime minister on science after reportedly confessing to his role.

But can Musharraf let national heroes such as Khan carry the can, when many Pakistanis and diplomats think they could not have acted without the knowledge and involvement of the military?

"The backlash now is against the army," said Najam Sethi, editor of the Daily Times.

"It is against Musharraf for being an American stooge and against the army, for protecting their own and sacrificing scientists who played such a valuable role."

Musharraf won plaudits from outside Pakistan for what was seen as a brave decision to investigate the alleged transfer of uranium enrichment technology to so-called "rogue states" in the 1980s and 1990s.

But he may have had little choice when faced with overwhelming evidence from the International Atomic Energy Agency and from Iran and Libya themselves.

Retired Gen. Talat Masood is critical of the decision to turn the investigation over to the country's military intelligence agency and declare that the army was not involved.

"The real question is whether everyone is equal in law or whether there are some people who are above the law," he said.

"Such institutions also have to take the blame."

Khan is widely reported to have said he was acting on the indirect instructions of two former army chiefs, Gen. Aslam Beg and Gen. Jehangir Karamat.

Beg denies the accusation. Never in Pakistan's post-independence history has a former army chief been made accountable for his actions, and many doubt Musharraf would mount a serious investigation into one of his predecessors. *Reuters*

Deaths from bird flu outbreak reach 15

HANOI—Two more fatalities in Vietnam lifted the death toll from the bird flu outbreak to 15 on Wednesday as the World Health Organization said the disease was spreading so quickly that no part of Asia was safe.

The warning came as a leading US medical expert said China probably already has human cases of bird flu, and that precious time needed to prevent disaster was being lost because of a failure to acknowledge the extent of the epidemic.

Henry Niman, a bioengineer at Harvard Medical School, made the remarks amid renewed allegations that the spread of bird flu has been wider than previously thought, and that China has been covering it up.

"I'd be very surprised if there are no human cases in China at this time," Niman said. "It's unlikely that you have that many people, that many chickens, and that many outbreaks, and have no one come down with it," he said.

China is one of 10 Asian nations tackling bird flu outbreaks, but in human terms Vietnam, where 11 people have now died from 15 confirmed cases, is the worst affected.

The latest victims were a 24-year-old man from the central Vietnamese province of Lam Dong, who died on Tuesday, and a 15-year-old girl from Tay Ninh in the south, who passed away on Jan. 27, health officials said. *AFP*

A VETERINARY officer adds fuel into a pit where hundreds of slaughtered chickens are being cremated as villagers look on in Thanh Oai district, Northern province of Ha Tay on Wednesday. AFP

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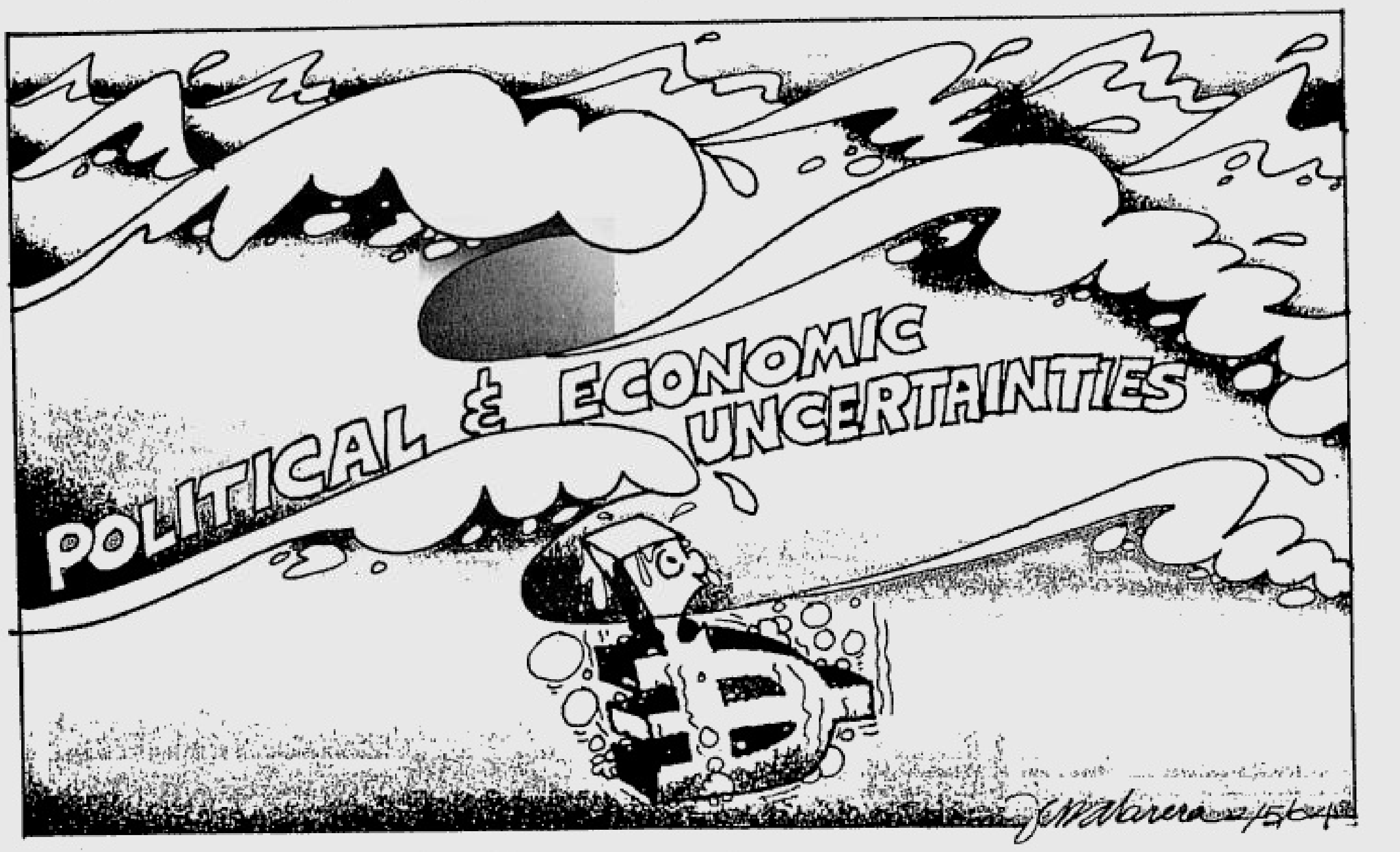

EDITORIALS

Bogeyman

THE MILITARY continues to loom large over the political landscape, a bogeyman conveniently trotted out during times deemed opportune by various parties. The leaking of a "secret" report last week to the INQUIRER by a high official based in Camp Aguinaldo—to the effect that a shadowy group is poised to install a military junta in the event of opposition presidential candidate Fernando Poe Jr.'s "expected victory" in May—indicates so. (But it also suggests a deliberate attempt at conditioning the public mind that a Poe presidency is equivalent to trouble.)

Malacañang has, to be sure, dismissed the report as unworthy of comment. Still, that its response to the news was nothing stronger than an expression of doubt vis-à-vis the report's existence would seem a bit cavalier to observers driven to extreme annoyance by the alleged military posturing. Malacañang's subtext appeared to be that the threat of a military takeover will continue to plague the body politic like, say, a tic, or b.o.

It's not too difficult to see how we have come to this—deemed, like children, to be easy prey to a bogeyman. Since she came to power on the wings of Edsa II, President Macapagal-Arroyo has comported herself as though she were in Malacañang only by the sufferance of the top brass, wooing and stroking them, engaging with them in boodle fights *ad nauseam,* appointing them to critical posts, and, most important, hewing to the same militarist mind-set that her disgraced predecessor so liked to display.

This behavior has helped resurrect the initial function of the military as a primary instrument of colonial rule, and which the dictator Ferdinand Marcos skillfully utilized and embellished to his advantage. It has emboldened certain military groups to speak and act provocatively on political issues, as though it were in their place to do so. It has driven otherwise thinking men, as well as ambulance chasers, crooks and charlatans, to look to and present the military as an alternative to corrupt civilian governance, as though the Philippine military were a strictly neutral entity dedicated only to the preservation of the public good.

It does not help any that the likes of that ex-soldier, Sen. Gregorio Honasan, continues to enjoy a stature shockingly inappropriate for one who damaged the economy to the tune of billions of pesos with his failed coup attempt in 1989. This is the same man who, when he was implicated in last year's failed mutiny of the Magdalo group and an investigation was being launched, chose to become "inaccessible"—an impertinence that Malacañang endured. (But Honasan's exaggerated sense of himself also derives from the importance attributed to him in the wake of Edsa I, when certain journalists inexplicably tripped all over themselves to lionize him—and the "heroic" military. Was it any wonder that in his subsequent defiance of and attacks against the administration of then President Corazon Aquino, as well as in "clandestine" interviews with journalists, he would claim the mandate of the people as his galvanizing force?)

Enforcer

NOW it appears that the "spokesman" of the group calling itself "Kawal Filipino" is not a soldier but was merely masquerading as one. From reports, the putative mastermind of the caper compelled the unfortunate Baltazar Asadon to wear a military uniform and to introduce himself as a captain in the course of reading a manifesto of soldiers' grievances. It would have been hilarious, rather like a scene in a movie by the darkly wacky Coen brothers, if it did constitute yet another proof of the perceived clout and capability of the military to shake up things and, for good measure, strike terror in the enemy. An Enforcer, in the language of the streets.

Even Malacañang's announcement last month that Defense Secretary Eduardo Ermita had been named chief executive officer of the President's campaign partakes of this perception of the military as Enforcer. It hardly matters that Ermita was quoted days later that he was not campaign CEO but merely consultant, and that he saw no conflict between his functions as such and as a member of the Cabinet.

And this is the way things are in this neck of the woods, where the President is apparently trying to break the glass wall of gender by claiming an equal level of testosterone.

Trade in orphan tears

VIEWPOINT

Juan L. Mercado

FORMER Sen. Miriam Defensor-Santiago tends to raise hackles when she speaks, specially in her Ilonggo cockney. But her recent statement that her family is adopting a six-month-old baby boy strummed the right vibes.

Many Filipino families, specially the poorer ones, heed "the sighs of orphans." Informal intra-familia adoptions, in fact, outnumber lawful foster-parenting, walled in by a thicket of restrictive legal safeguards.

Santiago's high-profile adoption also spotlights the shadowy cross-border peddling of babies, as more childless couples abroad adopt orphans.

"The international market for children has boomed," says the French think tank: Institut Francais des Relations Internationales. "For better or for worse, it now behaves much like a commodities market."

And there's a still-unfolding story: An adopted ailing infant—now an 8-year old, bespectacled bouncing Filipino first grader—may become the documented "miracle" the Vatican requires for canonization of Mother Marie Eugenie (1817-1898).

Recently beatified, "Mere" Marie Eugenie was the French founder of the Assumption order and schools. She "had a vision of what our ancient faith should mean to the modern world... that is of startling relevance to the Philippine situation," historian Horacio dela Costa, SJ has observed.

"In the past decade, 34,086 children, mainly from Asia as well as Eastern and Central Europe found new homes in Canada, Spain or Italy," the Institut Francais notes. Americans account for over half the world's total of documented inter-country adoptions. Soviet Russia banned foreigners becoming foster parents. Today, 4 out of 10 orphans, who've found US homes, come from Russia.

Filipino foundlings make up a trickle. In 1990, Filipino orphans, adopted by American couples, crested at 421. That slumped to 200 in 1998, then inched up to 221 in 2002.

Statistics on the "baby trade," specially in less-developed regions, are patchy, Institut fellow Ethan B. Kapstein writes. Conflict, poverty, changing social norms, corruption and policy shifts make tracking difficult.

China's one-child policy, for example, leaves many girl infants in need of foreign parents. Two-thirds of Chinese waifs put up for adoption are female.

The still-surging AIDS pandemic saw 13 million lose one or both parents. By 2010, those orphaned by AIDS may spiral to 25 million, Unicef estimates.

"Corruption distorts the baby trade," the quarterly Foreign Affairs points out. Unscrupulous go-betweens buy, even abduct, infants from impoverished parents. They're peddled in a trade that "drinks the tears of tears of orphans."

"From Albania to India, families and orphanages have swapped children for money, TV sets, cameras or watches."

The New York Times documented a story of "a family in India who sold their month-old daughter for $20."

Interim national measures seek to give teeth to the 1989 Convention on Rights of the Child and the Hague Convention on Protection of Children.

The United States, for example, has an "Adjudicate Orphan Status First." This program conducts non-binding reviews of orphans in Poland, Sierra Leone, Haiti, Honduras and the Philippines to determine if they are eligible for adoption and immigration.

Local adoption laws are stringent. A French couple gave up on adopting a Filipino baby girl, still in the womb. They opted for a Vietnamese. So, a childless Filipino couple gave "temporary shelter" to the baby—who on birth appeared semi-paralyzed.

But the couple (whose two earlier adopted daughters are now in Harvard and in Boston College) found themselves enthralled with the helpless waif. They bundled her first to Manila's best specialists, then to Houston and Boston. Stacks of X-rays and test reports later confirmed the Manila diagnosis: both lobes of the baby's brains were not joined. She'd never be normal. At most, she had 18 months to live.

Today, she's an alert first grader in a Metro Manila school. "She runs around, laughs, plays, is very affectionate and bright, " says Fr. James Reuter, SJ, who is the Vatican Nunciature's spokesperson.

Beyond that, neither Father Reuter nor anyone else will talk on the story: that the couple laid the motionless infant on Mother Eugenie's tomb in Paris. Encircled by Assumption nuns, they prayed for the intercession of the then-candidate for beatification.

But some facts are on record. Jaime Cardinal Sin authorized the official investigation. It's initial session opened quietly at the Assumption Convent in San Lorenzo.

Church officials led by Msgr. Jerry Raya intensively interviewed witnesses in Manila, Houston and Boston. A top Filipino doctor headed the panel of medical experts.

"There's nothing like this in the whole history of medicine," one specialist muttered. The evidence is now before Pope John Paul. He makes the final ruling.

"Babies are not commodities," the Kapstein analysis on "The Baby Trade" points out. "For thousands of children and parents, (their) only desire is to build a family."

Ms Defensor-Santiago and the bouncy Filipina first grader agree.

* * *

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Rough waters ahead

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

WELL, it's the same Isafp that exposed Panfilo Lacson's ill-gotten properties in San Francisco, and ended up failing to prove it in a Senate inquiry. It's the same Isafp that unearthed all sorts of threats from local and foreign terrorists, which called for paranoia and escalating the war against terrorism. Why should it be so strange that the same Isafp should tell us now there is a military plot to oust Fernando Poe Jr. if he should win?

The very name of the group is classic Orwellian, challenging as it does the entire concept of intelligence. Everyone has a right to scoff at it, including GMA's camp, to which it is an obvious embarrassment. Doubly so because it names Gregorio Honasan, FPJ's chief security, as the man behind the plot, an absurdity on top of absurdity. The absurdity does not lie in the fact that Honasan is incapable of betraying his friends, it lies in the fact that he is incapable of persuading any group to do it. I half suspect he himself creates these stories to relieve himself of the tedium or oppression of obscurity.

But the fact that Lt. Col. Daniel Lucero's intelligence (in more ways than one) is suspect, to say the least, does not preclude the possibility of stormy times ahead. It does not preclude the possibility of extra-constitutional or extra-legal projects, or specifically coups (or mutinies) and people power, being undertaken after the elections.

I go back to my thesis that the elections are a hiatus or respite or vacation from reality, and a most fleeting one. Before December last year, the possibility of a coup or people power did exist. That was particularly so at the height of the House's attempt to unseat Hilario Davide Jr., both camps blaming GMA for plotting against and/or aiding and abetting the Chief Justice. A mutiny had taken place in July, against all expectations, like a bolt from the blue. And one public opinion poll at least showed that a majority of Filipinos sympathized with the mutineers' grievances, if not their method of seeking redress. Only the elections prevented the country from sliding into a darker mood, and times.

But for that reason, I should think the Isafp should worry less about a military plot to oust FPJ if he wins than one to oust GMA if she does. I've never bought the idea that the reason GMA, like Cory, has been vulnerable to a military mutiny or coup is that she is not an elected president, and that therefore once she becomes so, the rumblings are going to disappear. If it were so, GMA should have met with far more coup attempts than Cory since she had less moral ascendancy than Cory, or in more practical terms had less public support than Cory. She did not. She had only one mutiny against her, though if the election bug had bit a little later, you never know what could have happened.

My thesis remains that GMA sowed the seeds of a military mutiny or coup by giving the military back a praetorian mentality—defender of the faith and protector of the republic—quite apart from thrusting them back to the limelight, through George W. Bush's "war against terror." A praetorian mentality reinforced by popular culture—movies, TV shows, cable news (notably Fox)—that extolled martial virtues. You continue to see that in ads and movements calling for no elections, signed by various AFP and PNP officers, retired and active, and installing a new government instead, one that will implement democratic reforms under the watchful eye of the Armed Forces. They may be fringe during the election period (elections in this country have a way of sweeping everything in their path), but they won't be so after.

So long as civilian supremacy is not restored and reaffirmed in the most strenuous terms—human rights, civil liberties, the rule of law, elections, people empowerment, the works—any future president of this country, elected or not, libertarian or not, reformist or not, will not have the crown rest easy on his head.

But what makes GMA especially vulnerable to it is that the grievances of the mutineers against her have not disappeared. The fact that the public sympathized with those grievances then will not help deter them from that path. GMA is a known quantity, the other candidates are not. GMA has already brought the country to the desperate straits it reached last year and cannot expect to buy a long honeymoon period from her enemies. The other candidates can.

But the even bigger factor is how GMA is going to win the elections. For many Filipinos, that can only come from cheating. She is already widely expected to do so, being hugely unpopular, as she herself admitted implicitly when she declared her intention not to run in December 2002. That can only be exacerbated by a Comelec that has been discredited entirely, being unable to count correctly, as shown by its inability to count the number of years Mega Pacific has been in existence. The Kawal revelations that GMA ordered her generals to make life hell for the other candidates can't possibly make things better, especially in light of the arrestees being ridiculously charged with violation of the Flag Law.

FPJ has a different problem, which is that the people around him have a way of sparking people power. Twice already they have done so, as henchmen of Ferdinand Marcos and as henchmen of Joseph Estrada. Will they have learned their lessons? Well, power has a way of addling the brain and plunging learning curves. The only lesson they would probably have learned by this time is that they shouldn't give up power so easily. The next people power, if or when it comes, won't be bloodless.

Lucero may be wrong to warn that the military will try to oust FPJ if he wins. But he is right to suggest very rough waters lie ahead.

Media can help ease instability

POLITICAL TIDBITS

Belinda Olivares-Cunanan

THE CONTINUED plunge of the peso was caused by the rise in demand for the dollar in the local market, which was, in turn, triggered by the dumping by foreign investors of local stocks and their buying of dollars they invested in those stocks last month. Economic and business analysts have attributed this development to the fear of the foreign investors about continued political instability as well as the fact that Fernando Poe Jr. leads in the surveys. A respected foreign bank doing business in the Philippines, Standard Chartered Bank, has warned that this country could go the way of Argentina, which suffered a meltdown two years ago and had to be bailed out by the international institutions, if it does not watch out.

* * *

This stark reality behooves all Filipinos, who love their country and fear an Argentina scenario, to rally behind it. Some businessmen have asked financial institutions to boost the stock market with their investments, so as not to be too dependent on foreign investors. But the fact is that government financial institutions are reluctant to do so, following the abuses during the Estrada administration when they were made to invest in Erap crony stocks. Congress' decision to reenact the 2003 budget for this year has resulted in savings of nearly P60 billion, a step in the right direction. But other measures have to be taken to counter the peso's plunge and stock-market jitters.

* * *

The foreign investors' fears are reflected by the local business community. In a recent mock election, the Makati Business Club gave FPJ zero, while President Macapagal-Arroyo garnered nearly half of the votes. This is not surprising, for as political analysts are now saying, the May elections have narrowed down to a contest between these two. The emerging reality is that neither Raul Roco nor Panfilo Lacson has the funding or the grassroots organization to carry them to victory, and this is causing a shift of support from Roco to GMA.

The problem is that the D and E classes, where FPJ draws his votes, make up 82 percent of the votes. This is the reason foreign investors are afraid: these classes could sweep him into the presidency. But this should only serve to wake up the thinking voters about the need to campaign among the broad masses not to vote for him. I have nothing personal against FPJ, but it is quite clear, except to unscrupulous politicians, that he can't handle the job, even though his handlers have been trying to cram lessons into his head. Last week, the media saw for themselves how current issues such as the peso's volatility and the widening budget deficit simply went over FPJ's head. Queried on these issues, he replied after long hesitation, "I am at a loss for words." When a media person insisted on pursuing the subjects, he tossed the question back with ill-disguised impatience, "How would you handle it?"

* * *

One wonders how the more intelligent politicians like Senators Edgardo Angara and Aquilino Pimentel can continue to inflict FPJ on the nation, solely because he has a strong following among the *masa*. The opposition has a lot to answer for our instability. First, it has threatened civil war or revolution if FPJ is disqualified. One can surmise that they're saber-rattling because they can sense that proof that FPJ is a natural-born citizen is rather weak and that the Supreme Court would disqualify FPJ. Then sensing that the popularity of their candidate appears to have hit a plateau, the opposition is now raising the specter of cheating by the administration. All these are contributing to the instability.

* * *

There is a perceptible disenchantment with FPJ among the media after they were exposed to his no-talk no-mistake stance and his temper. But the media can also do so much to counter the perceived instability. One way is by not wasting time and space on characters like Pastor Saycon and Linda Montayre, who like to portray themselves as influential leaders, but whose following, to quote a pundit, can be loaded in two tricycles. These two are media creations. Neither should we waste precious time and space on army captains who hurl accusations at government officials without offering an iota of evidence, or indulge in their childish game of mounting coups that always fail. The media should understand their grave responsibility to help make the nation stable.

* * *

The P500-million scholarship fund for needy college students, called Students' Assistance Fund for Education for a Strong Republic" (SAFE 4 SR) and which was recently launched by the President, is going to be a relief to many parents, if properly administered. One big problem of parents is the huge expenses that senior college studies entail. This has led to a lot of dropouts.

I note, however, that one of the criteria for qualifying for the scholarship fund is that the student "should have the intention of using the loaned amount solely for educational expenses." But how does the government ensure wise spending by the students of loans amounting to as much as P8,000 per semester? A recent guest at the dzRH Sunday program I co-host with Cecile Alvarez, Josephine Calamlam, a 1999 Metrobank Outstanding Teacher awardee who handles Grade 2 at the Philippine Normal University, noted that when students get their hands on some money, chances are they would first buy an expensive cellphone.

To keep money from being wasted, payments for tuition, which should form the bulk of the funds, should be sent straight to the college or university upon submission of the assessment from the school registrar.

The MJ's leap of faith

HUMAN FACE

Ma. Ceres P. Doyo

"COMMITMENT," the homilist said, "is not staying in a place from which you cannot leave. It is letting go and holding on to a new call. The important thing is not that one spends a whole life doing something, but what one does with one's whole life and how one does it. Commitment is the fine art of waiting for a thing to become for us what we thought a long time ago it was—makers of our history and partners in God's mission. Father Joe, this was your dream and the dream of your M.J. brothers."

That was Fr. Percy Juan, M.J., noted missiologist, speaking during the Mass at the wake of Fr. Jose Saplala, M.J. at St. Scholastica's College chapel last Sunday. Father Joe, 68, died of cancer on Jan. 31. He was buried yesterday after a glorious farewell from kith and kin.

I had plans of writing about the M.J. (Missionaries of Jesus) sometime back, but I was waiting for the right time. Perhaps now is the time.

The M.J. is a group of priest-missionaries (38 Filipinos, two Belgians and one American) that broke away in 2002 from the Belgian-founded C.I.C.M. (Congregation of the Immaculate Heart of Mary). The early Belgian missionaries here served the people of the Cordillera, spoke their language and lived among them. The C.I.C.M. now runs huge institutions such as Maryhill School of Theology and St. Louis University.

Those who broke away are among the best and the brightest and the most committed to mission. Father Joe, the first Filipino C.I.C.M., and the young-ish Fr. Percy Juan, former father provincial, were among them. This was a split that was bound to happen. East clashes with West, new wine tearing at old wineskins, and the idea of "doing mission" no longer the same for everyone. *Ad gentes* as against *ad extra*. The former implies bridging the gap between faith and unbelief and being engaged in intercultural dialogue of life; the latter implies a geographical crossing over, sort of.

It was a painful act of breaking free. Bloody and bloodied are understatements. It was a leap of faith on the part of those who chose the path less taken, a leap in the dark for only the brave.

Yes, it is, when you sally forth with only the clothes on your back and your shadow no longer allowed to darken the portals of what used to be your home, the cradle of your missionary vocation. That is not a figure of speech.

I have read the accounts describing what led to this: what happened at the congregation's General Chapter in Rome, the exchange of letters, the hurling of accusations. Filipinos are "power grabbers." Wow. Why, a number of international congregations, European-founded at that, already have had Filipinos or Asians as either superior generals or members of the General Council. *Magaling ang Pinoy.*

I have also read the proposal to establish a second C.I.C.M. province in the Philippines, an offshoot of that debacle. Those who proposed this had hoped it would "foster a positive tolerance for diversity... (and) allow for attempts to live and do mission differently and in a manner close to the Filipino mind and heart, integrated in the people's way of life." This would have eased the conflict.

Alas, this was not to be. And so on June 12, 2002, anniversary of Philippine Independence and birth anniversary of C.I.C.M. founder Theophile Verbist, the parting of ways became complete.

The breakaway group chose Fr. Wilfredo Dulay, himself a gritty warrior, to be coordinator general. The M.J. is now under the benevolent protection of Archbishop Fernando Capalla, president of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines. Former CBCP head and canon lawyer Archbishop Oscar Cruz acts as adviser.

It will take a while for the M.J., some of whose members have logged 30 to 48 years as C.I.C.M. priest-missionaries, to get pontifical status but this didn't deter this band of brothers from breaking new ground and wading into new frontiers. A saint is not less a saint just because she or he is not yet canonized by the Vatican.

Religious congregations splitting in half is not new. The matter of division of resources and granting of benefits often adds to the pain. Profit-oriented business corporations do better by their employees.

But that is not even the core issue. (Hey, it's a labor issue.) Father Dulay described the issue thus: "From the very beginning, the congregational charism rested on two foundational pillars: mission *ad gentes* and mission to the poor… Has its actual practice deviated from the founding charism by devoting itself to pastoral work *ad extra* (attending to the pastoral care of Christians outside one's own country) but neglecting mission *ad gentes*, which is the theological heart of mission: the good news must be proclaimed to all nations?"

The "rebels" had brought up the issue that 75 percent of their missionaries around the world were taking care of Christians mostly and not leaving their comfort zones.

My two cents worth: I think "jurassic" religious life, if it does not remain true to its mission and keep pace with the world, if it neglects contemplative prayer, will die out. New forms (lay communities perhaps?) will take its place.

Some years ago, I wrote an investigative series on European congregations, on the verge of becoming extinct, doing massive vocation recruitment among little-educated Asians who would care for their aged. This alarmed our Bureau of Immigration. Europe is drying up. As someone said, "The last surviving one will turn off the lights."

"M.J." was on the lips of Father Joe till the end. Some of his last words: "By the grace of God, little by little, I began to understand the will of God. I began to understand what life is all about."

* * *

Send comments to cerespd@info.com.ph

Popularity versus intelligence

THE LONG VIEW

Manuel L. Quezon III

A FILIPINO politician once explained his success by telling a rival that "all the people want is the problem solved—and with the least pain."

This is true. And it indicates the problem some highly intelligent people have as politicians. This is not to say that there is no room for intelligent people, or even intellectuals, in national life. But it explains why so many intellectually inclined politicians never get as far as they'd like—or deserve to.

The classic example is when Raul Manglapus proposed the abolition of the town fiesta: it was too radical a plan, too soon, and only fostered the impression, fair or not, that while he meant well, he was impractical. Of course, nowadays towns simply don't spend the way they used to for fiestas, in part because of the country's inexorable slide into poverty that Manglapus was already concerned with in the 1960s.

To denounce the phenomenon of popularity as we see it today, is to display an unhealthy attitude toward what is, after all, "popular democracy." Leaders should seek to be popular, and it is healthy, even necessary, for popularity to be a determining factor in electoral success. The real question should be, why aren't enough of the people considered deserving of public office popular? Do the people, as the electorate, prefer the glib to genuinely articulate, the superficial to the profound?

In a democracy, you have to have faith in the electorate and see the logic behind their choices, otherwise you might as well support a dictatorship, whether of the proletariat or the military right, and that has proven to achieve nothing except the ruin of the countries involved. In the case of our country, the electorate recognizes brilliance and rewards it—up to a point. One of the top three leaders in the first decades of the 20th century was Rafael Palma, a brilliant scholar and writer. The electorate didn't want him to be president, but as long as he wanted to remain in the Senate, Claro M. Recto always won. The thing is, brilliance, as far as the electorate is concerned, is best utilized in the Senate but not a preeminent factor in selecting the person to be made tenant in Malacañang.

Your first democratic experience was probably electing your class officers in grade school and high school. I'm willing to bet the smartest, most disciplined kid never won, but instead, the position of class president always went to the one the class viewed as the most charming, easygoing and dynamic. The smart one, if at all, ended up class secretary.

As it was for class positions, so it is for the top national position. The presidency of this country has never been anchored on intellectual ability, it has depended on which candidate the electorate felt best suited to fulfilling their expectations of presidential leadership: the one with the charisma that comes from understanding what the people want to see in a leader.

Leadership has always been about show biz. This is nothing new. Diosdado Macapagal won his first race (for the House) because he was better at poetic jousts than his opponent. Where is the element of substantive discussions in a poetry contest? Present-day observers yearning for the days of old, when politicians engaged in marathon three-day debates, might as well be hoping for the return of the days of Homer, when people could be entertained by listening to bards weave tales of heroic greatness by reciting epic poems.

Politicians on the stump in the old days made long speeches in Spanish and English (to a nation not yet united by a national language), which the electorate enjoyed listening to because we still had a society in which the epic recitation of anything was entertaining. But mass media has resulted in new forms of communication, different ways of entertaining, while our politicians are stuck in the pre-vaudeville age.

Communication is the lifeblood of politics, and the successful politician is the one who can best communicate. When the means and style of communicating have changed, the politician has to adapt or lose. When Imelda Marcos changed campaigning forever by singing on stage, she was adapting to an age in which song and film had replaced the *balagtasan* as popular entertainment. When politicians began dancing on stage, it was because the public wanted proof that, during the campaign season at least, the audience is king and not the politician.

When people are upset over the fact that most politicians will gladly sing and dance instead of discuss something serious, they ignore the real problem. There is a certain logic behind the satisfaction the public gets from seeing politicians clown around, to be sure. But it doesn't mean—or shouldn't mean—that all the public cares for is to elect clowns. It means that better the clown you can relate to than the supposedly intelligent person who is incapable of communicating with you.

Which means the clowns win by default because there are more clowns than brilliant people and too many brilliant people prefer to grumble than to fight—and fight well. Yet even in a crowd of clowns, the electorate is always looking for leaders who have that indefinable combination of personal courage and charisma, that combination of being able to properly communicate and an unshakeable confidence to lead, without the equivocation intellectuals are so susceptible to, that we Filipinos consider the mark of a true leader.

Who's lucky

YOUNG BLOOD

Diandra-Ditma Macarambon

We want to know what the young are thinking about. What are their thoughts on current issues? We welcome contributions from the twentysomething and below.—Ed.

LIFE is God's greatest gift to us.

I have heard and read this statement over and over again since I was a little girl and too young to know how great the gift really was and to comprehend what life was about. As I grew up, I learned to appreciate life and came to realize that life indeed was a great gift and a very precious one.

Once, I was cyberchatting with a man who was really nice. He was about my father's age and we talked of serious things, such as religion, racism and the world's present condition. He told me I was different from other people my age because, young as I was, he could feel that I had a serious view of the world. He told me to stick to my principles. Then, before saying "Ciao!" he told me I was really lucky to be alive and see the world, in all its beauty and with all its mysteries.

I reflected on that, and decided that I was truly lucky to be alive. That was three years ago.

Two months later, a 14-year-old girl died when a drunken jeepney driver drove straight at the car she was riding. How cruel it was for a girl, who was so young, to die. She had so much to see, so much to discover and so much to achieve.

Still when I think about life, I can't help but recall what my cyberpal told me. How I wish I could still say, "Yeah, I really am lucky."

Life has not really been bad to me. But, for some other people life has been worse as hell. In some parts of Mindanao, families have been driven away from their homes. They had to leave all that they owned and saw their houses burn to ashes. These are innocent people, who became victims of a war that has been slowly eating up Mindanao.

Mindanao, homeland to millions of people like me, is being swallowed by a bitter war. What can people like me do? Should we, like the other victims, just wait for our own houses to be burned? Should we wait for our turn to ride toward nothingness? What have we done to deserve this fate? Should we be thankful to be alive?

Seeing fellow Filipinos killing each other instead of helping one another really disillusions young people like me. Why is this happening? My Muslim brothers are fighting for something and so are my brothers in the Armed Forces. Who is wrong? Who is right? What is it really about?

I am not so sure about the answer. All I see are the innocent victims. What I am sure of is that the ones taking the punishment are civilians like me.

I cannot help but cry for my brothers and sisters, my fellow Filipinos, who have been thrown into the war. I cannot bear to see innocent people being driven out of their humble homes to be transformed into beggars. I cannot bear to imagine Mindanao—my Mindanao—burn to ashes.

I wonder if I should be thankful to be alive. If in this life what awaits me is destruction, then what is there to live for?

Destruction. War. Blood. Death. That 14-year-old girl, should I be sorry for her? Was she unlucky to not have lived long? Or was she the lucky one for dying young? I'm not so sure anymore.

Diandra-Ditma Aguam Macarambon, 23, is taking her master's in English Studies at the University of the Philippines, Diliman. She grew up inside the Mindanao State University campus in Marawi City.

Urban farmer

Cristina A. Montes

WHILE browsing through National Bookstore a year ago, a book entitled "Urban Agriculture: A Step by Step Guide to Successful Container Farming in the City" piqued my curiosity. Illustrations of vegetables growing in drums, used gutters, trash cans, and tires on roofdecks and balconies of high-rise apartments filled the book's pages. Impressed by the novel concept the book presented, I bought it.

Eventually, I also bought lettuce seeds, pechay seeds, garden soil and coconut shell shavings. I requested our cook to get empty styropor fruit cases from the wet market. I invested P625 on a ceramic bowl where the seedlings would be transplanted.

Every weekend, squatting on the concrete floor behind our kitchen, I cleaned containers, mixed soil, sowed seeds and, later on, transplanted seedlings, as the book instructed. My muscles ached from the labor. I was bitten by mosquitoes. But touching soil and seeds instead of books fascinated me. The wind in the trees and the sounds of insects, birds and lizards provided relaxing background music.

Seeing the seedlings in a new developmental stage each week thrilled me. Like other farmers, I also experienced pests and storms. Still, come December, we had enough lettuce for our salad on Christmas Eve and to give to my grandparents. We had also a steady pechay supply for quite some time.

My success with planting lettuce and pechay got our entire household hooked on planting vegetables. Mother bought potted herbs and more seeds. A sister bought a packet of sweet corn seeds with her own allowance. Our maids, on their own initiative, started planting leftover vegetable cuttings.

One day, a maid opened the compost bin and saw hundreds of tomato seedlings. She had unintentionally discarded tomato seeds into the compost bin, and the seeds had germinated.

She transplanted the tomato seedlings to the empty lot in front of our house. I had my doubts about growing tomatoes in the rocky land, but they flourished. We have been harvesting enough tomatoes to fill up a half-gallon ice cream container. Lately we have been enjoying crispy, juicy, tasty organically grown tomatoes in salads or with fish, salted egg and *bagoong*.

We still have a lot to learn about farming. We're still figuring out how to protect the sweet corn from ants or the pechay from herbivorous birds. We hope to learn soon, so that we can grow all the vegetables enumerated in the "Bahay Kubo" song, and many more.

After our successful urban agriculture experience, doomsayers who panic about the population growing faster than the food supply and who predict a time when the earth will run out of food don't scare us. We now know that Mother Nature provides in abundance, and human ingenuity, combined with industry, coaxes her generosity. She rewards the resourceful and the hardworking—sometimes with surprises, as when she surprised us with tomato seedlings sprouting in the compost bin.

Cristina A. Montes, 27, is a student at the University of the Philippines College of Law.

LETTERS

Citizens should make democracy work

IN THIS MODERN democratic era, for any group to be enamored with the idea that a military takeover will solve the problems of the nation is appalling.

The call for military takeover by groups such as the Citizen's Committee on National Crisis (CCNC) is downright irresponsible. It is not an "either-or" choice between democracy or military rule. Just because democracy is not functioning the way we envision it, it does not follow that military rule becomes a viable option. The challenge is to make democracy work!

One does not need to delve deep into history to get a glimpse of how military rule works. The dominance of the military during the Marcos regime should be enough for us to see the irreversible harm a military rule can do to the economy and the democratization process. Had martial rule not been imposed, the country would have successfully institutionalized the principle of civilian control of the military.

The turbulent history in Latin America also gives us noteworthy lessons to ponder on. Where the military once ruled in countries like Chile, Argentina and Brazil, the economic conditions worsened. Worse, there were no legitimate avenues to express grievances. There were massive graft and corruption, and, worst of all, gross human rights violations.

I salute the men and women of the Armed Forces of the Philippines for rejecting CCNC's irresponsible call for intervention. As responsible Filipinos, let us not allow our country to sink into a deeper quagmire by falling into the false promises of military rule. History must not repeat itself. Though the government has the inherent responsibility to address the needs of the people, every responsible citizen should do his/her share in making democracy work. We can do this through our own simple ways such as by keeping a vigilant eye on potential destabilizers in the upcoming elections.

—BRYAN A. SAN JUAN,
University of the Philippines
Diliman, Quezon City

Where is Bonifacio City?

IT has been a long standing "tradition" in the Philippines to name a street, a district, a town after some Filipino politician or aristocrat. Take Montalban, Rizal. It's been Montalban for a long time and when I went back home in 1996, it's been changed to Rodriguez. To honor Amang? Okay.

There are other towns in the Philippines named after "famous" local folks; Narciso Ramos in Pangasinan, GMA in Cavite and others. Why is this? To please some rich people? Take Herrera Street in Makati. What's its name now?

V.A. Rufino. Why? Because of the Rufino Building at the corner of Herrera and Ayala? What about Alfaro? It's now L.P. Leviste. Why? Because there are three LPL buildings along Alfaro? Why not rename the streets in Palanan like Farenheit, Diesel? I'm sure people will not complain.

But my real question is: Why is there no town or city in the Philippines named after Andres Bonifacio? Was his contributions to setting the Philippines free not enough, or is it because he was poor? Just wondering.

—CHITO SALALAC,
5525 Palmerston Cres.
Mississauga, Ontario, Canada
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Where are the warning signs?

I WOULD like to call attention to the dangerous absence of road signs to warn motorists of merging and disappearing lanes on the north superhighway which is currently undergoing repairs.

A few weeks ago, on the way to Manila, we were on the third lane of a 4-lane portion when the car in front of us suddenly veered to the left because the lane we were on suddenly came to an end. There was a barrier with a ditch behind the barrier. We had to immediately veer to the right. Fortunately, a truck on the third lane anticipated our move, veered to the right but not enough because there was a speeding car to his right. We were sideswiped by the truck which damaged the right side of our car and broke off the right side view mirror. Considering ourselves very lucky, we forgot to call the police and just let the truck drive away. We are still negotiating repairs with insurance.

Yesterday, there were three places going south without signs. In a place which sported one, the sign was placed right where the road started to narrow.

Concerned agencies should please act immediately.

—LUZ TORRES,
15-14 Nena Drive Villa Teresa,
Angeles, dodropin@mozcom.com

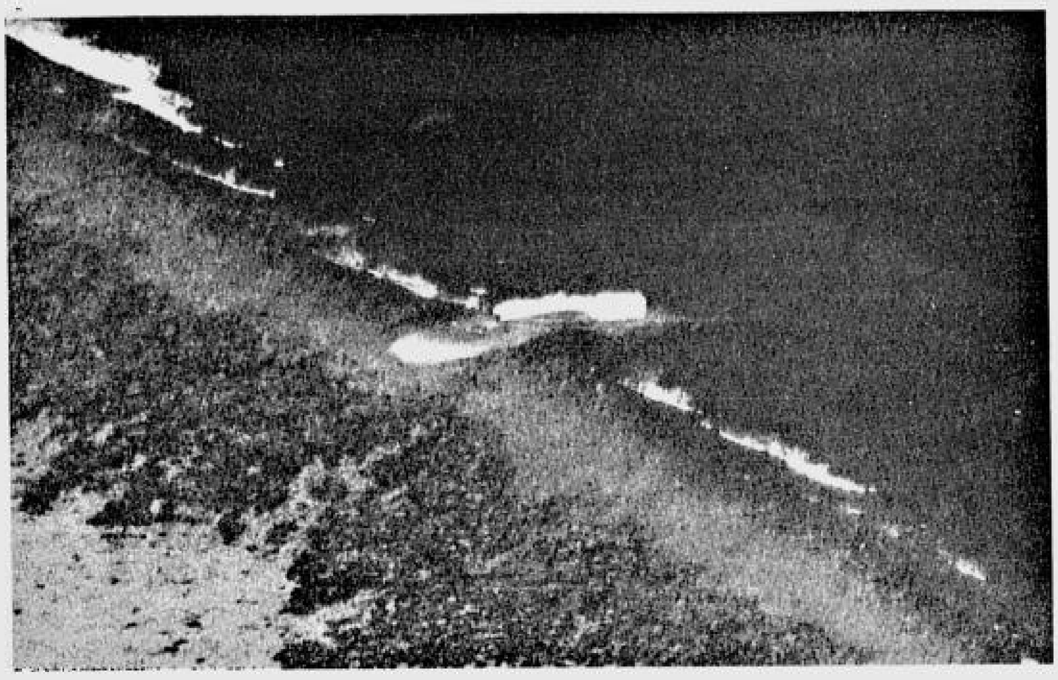
Remembering the WWII vets

YOUR article in the Jan. 22 issue "War vets are not excited about new US benefits" seems to sum up the unfortunate situation of 20,000 surviving World War II veterans in the Philippines.

And who should be blamed for this? The lobby group headed by Rep. Tomas Dumpit and "big name" lobbyists that went to the United States last year, funded by a $2-million expense account, apparently did not do their homework. Reports said they were not even able to see the right people in the United States.

The benefits being awaited by Philippine domiciled veterans, even in the form of medical treatment for non-service disabilities, would ease the miserable lives of almost all those vets, now in their 80s bedeviled with heart ailments, arthritis, blind, deaf, in wheelchairs awaiting the elusive benefits. A fresh lobby group this year? Don't send the "professionals." Send the veterans in wheelchairs, that should do the trick!

—FRANCISCO G. CEDULA,
national commander,
Philippine Veterans Legion,
PVAO Compound,
Antonio J. Villegas St.,
Ermita, Manila



DENR not sleeping on job

THE EDITORIAL of the INQUIRER's Jan. 29 issue noted that the Department of Environment and Natural Resources is "under fire from environmentalists and the Mindoro folk for its laid-back stance vis-à-vis (the)cruise ship that ran aground on the protected Apo Menor Reef more than a month ago."

We find the observation very unfair for our people in the field who risked their lives to do their job.

If we may recall, the incident happened at the height of Typhoon Zigzag. Even under rough conditions, our staff were among the first to help in the rescue of the passengers and crew of the Island Explorer. The following day, additional DENR staff went to the site to ensure that the vessel's engine room and the fuel tank were properly locked to prevent oil spill. If not for our field men, the oil spill would have been worse. But as we pointed out in our media briefing, the oil leak was minimal.

On the issue of the ship's retrieval, the operation started on Jan. 30, 2004, under the supervision not only of the DENR but also of the Protected Area Management Board of APO Reef, which is composed of local officials, non-government organizations and people's organizations in the area. The operation will last for about 10 days.

On the rehabilitation of the damaged portion of the reef, covering about 250 square meters, we already asked the UP Institute of Marine Science for their technical assistance in assessing the damage and in developing the rehabilitation plan. The shipping company will finance the rehabilitation program.

On the issue of bird flu, we wish to assure the public that we will strictly enforce all the precautionary measures to prevent the entry of the virus into the country. Along with our directive to ban the importation of all pet and caged birds, particularly those coming from countries reported to have the bird flu outbreak, we have directed our field offices to conduct surveillance of areas where migratory birds congregate.

We have likewise instructed them to conduct an information campaign and enjoin local communities to report immediately to the nearest DENR office any incidence of migratory bird mortality.

—GRACE F. FAVILA, officer in charge, Public Affairs Office,
Department of Environment and
Natural Resources, Visayas
Avenue, Diliman, Quezon City

Less talk, less mistakes

PRESIDENTIAL candidate Fernando Poe Jr.'s continued refusal to face the public is keeping everybody in a state of anxiety. Unless he makes public pronouncements on his official stand on major issues and starts exercising his right to free speech, we, the Filipino voting public, will never be able to make a sound judgment when we cast our ballots this May.

Huge segments of our society remain blinded by the hypnotizing spell of his screen persona. Considering that almost all his movies tackled populist themes that were box-office hits, his candidacy will no doubt attract the same voters' base as his bosom body, former President Estrada, himself a creation of the entertainment industry.

Poe owes it to the public that he be heard and scrutinized. It is not enough that he smiles to the camera, utter a few incoherent statements and take advantage of his fans gullibility to catapult himself to power. Any candidate for the highest post in the country should have genuine merit and his/her ideas must be articulated to the general public. Presidential candidates should take an active part in public debates over issues to enable the public to gauge their competence.

But Poe seems to be content to just ride on his phenomenal popularity and name recall-to the public's disadvantage. Less talk, less mistakes, his handlers might be thinking.

—PASTOR JOSUE DIMAANO,
Meycauayan, Bulacan,
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Rekindle the embers of hope.

On Jan. 11, 2004, more than 25,000 people were left homeless due to a fire that razed the Baseco Compound in Tondo. Residents were moved to nine evacuation centers and now need food, clothes, medicine, vitamins, toiletries, mats, blankets, milk, feeding bottles and clean water. Relief assistance can be coursed through the Bayanihang Baseco campaign, one manifestation that Filipinos care and are heroes in their own way by helping others out of difficult times.

HOW TO HELP:

* For bulk donations -- DSWD-NCR: Director Alicia R. Bala, Ms. Dominga Godinez and Ms. Lorelie Suelo, 389 San Rafael Street, Quiapo, Manila or call 7348647/49/17/37
* For evacuees' daily needs -- Manila Dept. of Social Welfare: Dr. Jose M. Barranda, Manila City Hall, or call 5274916/5274949
* For perishable goods -- Barangay Office: Chairman Tess Lumactud, Barangay 649, Bagong Lupa, Baseco, or call 4041047
* McDonald's restaurants & Petron service stations in the NCR region will also serve as drop-off centers.

Bayanihang BASECO is spearheaded by in coordination with INQUIRER Partners PETRON HANDS ON MANILA SOLVANG PHARMA, INC

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Something fishy?

I WOULD not have minded the case of my mother if not for the article of Tarra Quismundo (PDI, 1/14/04) regarding the plight of the 83-year-old GSIS retiree Victoria Dumdum of Cebu.

My mother, Maria Alingalan Salarda who is now 75 years old, is also a retired public school teacher from Nabunturan, Compostela Valley Province. She has been receiving her GSIS pension since 1996 through her account at Land Bank of the Philippines.

Last December, she received a communication from the GSIS office, Tagum City branch, informing her that she has been receiving double pension and she was asked to report immediately to the GSIS office.

Due to her age and physical condition, my younger sister, who had just delivered her one-month-old baby, accompanied her just to prove to them that the allegation of double pension is not true.

Upon reaching the GSIS office, they found out that somebody from Villa Francisco Subdivision of Sta. Barbara, Iloilo, who has the same family and maiden name as my mother's, is also currently receiving a monthly pension. Her date of birth is also Sept. 9, 1928 like my mother's. However, the lady from Sta. Barbara retired in 1998 while my mother retired in 1991. If that lady was born in 1928 and retired in 1998, she would have been 70 years old and obviously overaged when she retired. And if she opted to receive a five-year lump sum benefit, she must have received her first monthly pension last October 2003, thus the matter was noticed.

My mother is currently receiving a monthly pension of P5,101, while the lady is receiving a monthly pension of more than P9,000.

After some questions, the GSIS personnel just got the policy number of my mother, her account number at Land Bank and other pertinent data, promising to check the matter the soonest and advising my mother not to worry anymore.

However, until now, we are wondering how it could have happened. My mother is also a native of Iloilo. She was born in Alimodian, a few kilometers away from Sta. Barbara. She finished her degree in BS Elementary Education at Lopez Jaena College School in Iloilo City and began her teaching career here in Davao in 1957 until she retired in 1991 at age 63.

Is there really a possibility that that there could be two identical persons bearing the same name and born on the same date? Or are there really questionable transactions at the GSIS? There is talk that if a GSIS member doesn't avail of the salary loan or regular loan privilege, somebody else at the GSIS will, using her/his name. I hope these allegations are not true.

Just like Dumdum, my mother was lucky enough to have a child who could assist her. How about the other retirees who are much older than them and who might have no children who can assist or accompany them? I hope that the ordeal of my mother, as well as Dumdum's, will not befall any GSIS retiree henceforth.

—LOURDES ALINGALAN SALARDA ADOR,
Purok 2, Nabunturan,
Compostela Valley Province

No way to treat families of modern-day heroes

ALL the OFW (overseas Filipino workers) families sought was immediate action to address the plight of their loved ones. MIGRANTE Party List joined MIGRANTE International and the families in a camp-in at the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration to press for the immediate repatriation of 16 stranded OFWs in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. What we got was violence from those who were supposed to advance our rights and welfare!

The OWWA is mandated to shoulder welfare services out of OFW trust funds, including repatriation of distressed workers.

The camp-in was violently dispersed at about 8:00 p.m. last Jan. 27, 2004 by the Pasay City Police. We were truncheoned with sticks and M-16s upon orders of OWWA Administrator Virgilio Angelo, a favored appointee of Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo.

This violent incident clearly shows the current administration's criminal neglect toward suffering OFWs and their families.

Senior Supt. Catalan, Pasay City police chief, and Senior Insp. Reynaldo Baculan led the violent dispersal.

Among those arrested were MIGRANTE International secretary general Maita Santiago, Richard Evangelista and Mark Ramirez, chair and deputy secretary of the migrant youth group KAMIYAN, Chat Dimaano of the Filipino Seafarers Movement and MIGRANTE member Butch Tubera.

Also among those violently dispersed were the wives, children and supporters of the 16 OFWs.

—JOHN MONTERONA,
vice chairperson,
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Across the NATION

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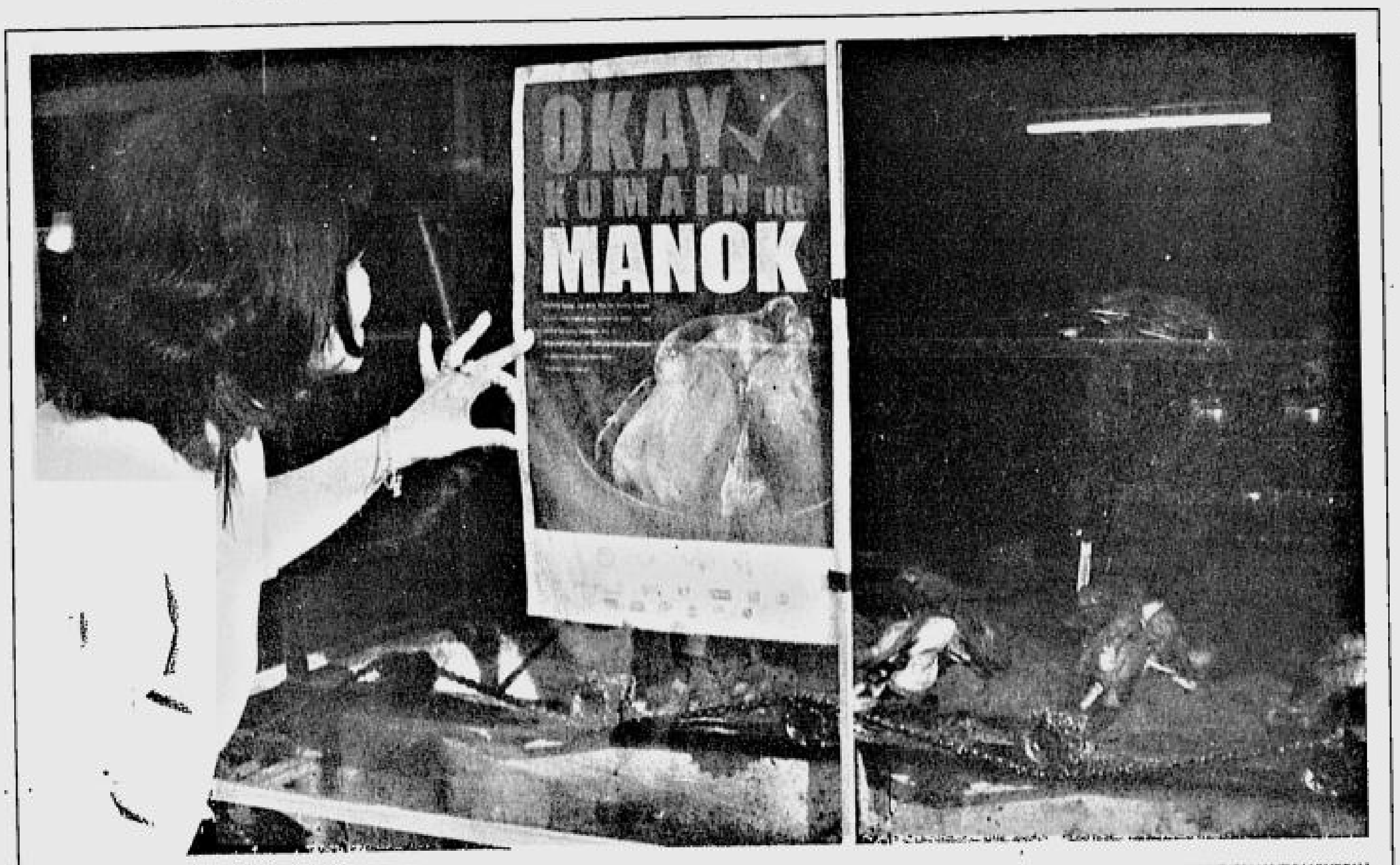

TOOTS SOBERANO/PDI NORTHERN LUZON BUREAU

CHICKEN FRENZY
Fears of bird flu spreading in the country have driven a nationwide campaign to promote chicken grown locally, churning up advertising materials like this poster at a roast chicken outlet in Baguio City.

Pagdanganan defends conversion of CARP lands for housing

BAGUIO CITY—Agrarian Reform Secretary Roberto Pagdanganan has sent out review teams to Cavite and Davao del Norte to validate the conversion of agrarian lands into housing projects.

Pagdanganan said the conversions were above board, and that President Macapagal-Arroyo's housing agenda had encouraged raising low-end shelter projects from abandoned or ill-advised agrarian properties.

"Only 1 percent of the whole agrarian land coverage is being used for housing," he said in a press briefing here.

But Pagdanganan said he had relented to the review to appease the farmers and members of nongovernment organizations who objected to "any more losses to our agricultural land resources."

He was criticized for upholding the application of Moldex Realty Inc. in Silang, Cavite, which wanted to convert their agricultural property into a housing enclave.

He also provoked farmers' groups to storm the Department of Agrarian Reform office in Manila for exempting 1,000 hectares belonging to four Davao del Norte-based farm corporations of businessman Antonio Floirendo.

According to press statements issued by the farmers, Pagdanganan allegedly reversed several decisions made by his predecessor, Hernani Braganza, which favored farmers in the area.

The INQUIRER quoted one of the farmer beneficiaries as claiming that the conversions and exemptions were made in the absence of a government ocular inspection of the contested agrarian lands.

Pagdanganan said most of these cases involved airtight documentation. But he said a second ocular review of the sites would be "the proper way to go." *Vincent Cabreza, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

New houses planned for victims of landslides

MAASIN CITY—Two-bedroom duplex housing units will soon rise for at least 300 families who lost their homes in land and mud slides and flash floods that hit three towns on Panaon Island in Southern Leyte last December.

The housing units will be built in relocation sites in the towns of Liloan and San Francisco previously inspected and given clearance for safety by inspectors from the Bureau of Mines and Geosciences of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

The landslides on Dec. 19 and 20, 2003 resulted in the deaths of 154 persons and injuries to 37 others. It displaced 793 families, including about 300 families who completely lost their homes, from the Panaon Island towns of Liloan, San Francisco and San Ricardo.

The new housing units for the landslide victims of Barangay Poblacion, Liloan will be built on a 1.6-hectare property in Barangay Anilao purchased by the local government unit from two private owners, according to town Mayor Zenaida Maamo.

The new cluster of houses will be known as the Mt. Pinatubo Foundation community since it will be the foundation that will pay for the 98 housing units that will be built in the area.

In San Francisco, the victims of the Barangay Punta landslide will be relocated to Barangay Central I on a 2-hectare lot. Landowner Santiago Maglana donated about 4,000 square meters of the area. The remaining area was bought for P800,000 by the municipal government from Concepcion Go.

San Francisco municipal social worker Lydia Tablo said Mayor Diego Yuboc already gave his go signal to start the construction of the housing units.

The San Francisco relocation site will be named Red Cross Community after the Philippine National Red Cross, which will shoulder the cost of the new 87 houses in the area. *Jani Arnaiz, PDI Visayas Bureau*

Industries caught in middle of feud over village control

ILIGAN CITY—A formal settlement of a boundary dispute between this city and the province of Lanao del Norte could mean trouble for big industries here.

Barangay Mandulog, which Rep. Abdullah Dimaporo claimed to be part of Lanao del Norte, hosts several of Iligan's industrial plants that have been remitting revenue in the form of taxes to the city government for years. Among the big industry players in the village are the state-run National Power Corporation and Alsons Cement Corporation which owe the provincial government a total of P20 million in revenues, Dimaporo said.

"Iligan has no right over Mandulog because the city government expanded (its territory) in that area without a legislative mandate," he said.

At the Sangguniang Panglungsod, Vice Mayor Lawrence Lluch Cruz said the city council and the province have yet to arrange a formal agreement after officials of the city and the province failed to heed an invitation for them to hold a meeting over the boundary dispute.

"The claims over Mandulog have been going on for decades. But there have been no formal settlements, only subtle discussions on the issue," Cruz told the INQUIRER.

Dimaporo admitted that although he started questioning Iligan's jurisdiction over Mandulog, it is only now that he became interested in it because Mandulog would increase Lanao del Norte's Internal Revenue Allotment (IRA).

The IRA, which is computed based on how big the territories are and how big their populations are, would greatly benefit the province, he explained.

The contested area boasts of rich mineral deposits, fertile agricultural lands and a waterfall which officials plan to tap for hydropower development.

"It is very simple. All that the Iligan City government has to do is to look back at the old boundary when it was first created," Dimaporo said.

Last year, the city government also signed a P15-million escrow agreement with Misamis Oriental over the issue of national wealth from industries lying on undefined boundaries.

Cruz said another boundary dispute with Lanao del Sur concerning being paid by the Napocor has not yet been resolved until today.

"We did not expect that the province would claim Mandulog. We were expecting that they intend to discuss the Agus River dispute instead," Cruz told the INQUIRER.

The city and province are also disputing jurisdiction over portions of the Agus River.

This city was in high spirits following the opening of the National Steel Corp.'s steel mill after several years of closure.

President Macapagal-Arroyo led rites for the opening of the mill, which was made possible by a financial package put together by local banks and an Indian firm. *Jezafe Aisha Echavez and Jeffrey P. Maningo, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

Communist guerrillas burn another bus in Sipalay City

BACOLOD CITY—Suspected communist rebels on Monday night torched a Ceres Liner bus in Barangay Camindangan, Sipalay City, about 178.4 km south of this city.

This brought to four the number of buses owned by Vallacar Transit Inc. (VTI) that had been burned by the New People's Army (NPA) in Negros Occidental and Negros Oriental since January.

Last Jan. 10, the NPA rebels also set on fire three Ceres buses in Canlaon City, Negros Oriental.

Senior Insp. Jomil John Trio, Sipalay police chief, said about 30 rebels poured gasoline on the Ceres bus with body number 5921, which was parked in Crossing Tanduay, Camindangan, Sipalay City.

Trio said the rebels did not harm the driver Jessie Batan and fare collector Ronald Pajarillo who were ordered to get off the bus before it was set on fire.

He said the NPA burned the bus after VTI management refused to pay taxes to the rebels.

The NPA Boy Gatmaitan Command earlier warned the VTI of more attacks unless it paid taxes. *Carla P. Gomez, PDI Visayas Bureau*

Dam named after GMA dad done, but farmers unpaid

ARAYAT, Pampanga—More than 200 farmers in six Pampanga towns have not been paid their right-of-way claims worth P69.3 million although the Cong Dadong Dam here, a Japanese-funded irrigation facility named after President Macapagal-Arroyo's father, is already 99.71 percent finished.

Reports gathered by the INQUIRER showed that the National Irrigation Administration (NIA) still owes 67 government employees at least P6.2 million in salaries and benefits.

NIA's unpaid obligations include P14 million in management fees and P191.4 million in civil works fees to contractors Taisei Kurimoto, C.M. Pancho Construction/Kubota Corp., and Lorenzo Construction and Development Corp., a company that the family of Nueva Ecija Rep. Raul Villareal owns.

These debts, all worth P281 million and comprised of government counterpart on a loan, were being settled through the help of the national government, said Reynaldo Mencias, manager of the NIA's Pampanga Delta development project.

Mencias said Ms Macapagal released P200 million in May 2003 to pay for continued work, personnel salaries and claims.

He said the P281 million covers the last arrears incurred in the P3.4-billion dam that because of protests and Mt. Pinatubo's 1991 eruptions took 26 years to complete.

The dam and its network of canals that diverted water from the Rio Chico and Pampanga Rivers occupied lands in the towns of Arayat, Sta. Ana. San Luis, Candaba, San Simon and Apalit.

At least 11,885 hectares of rice and vegetables farms are targeted for irrigation services in those towns.

Mencias said the Department of Budget and Management had retained the 15-percent mandatory reserve requirement of NIA's 2003 budget that may be tapped to pay for the project's obligation. He said this is worth P455.3 million from which the P281 million will be taken. *Tonette Orejas, PDI Central Luzon Desk*

Iligan City seeks more policemen

ILIGAN CITY—The city police has requested for additional men from the Northern Mindanao police office in Cagayan de Oro City to strengthen its peace-keeping efforts in some hinterland villages known for its feuding Muslim families.

Senior Supt. Minoy Darimbang, deputy city director, said they expressed apprehension that the feuds would cause disturbances during the conduct of the elections.

Darimbang said the additional troopers would come from the Regional Mobile Group based in Cagayan de Oro City and would be deployed to six of the city's predominantly Muslim barangays.

The villages, which border Lanao del Sur, have earlier been identified as areas of concern because of their proximity to the city proper.

These are Barangays Rogongon, Kalilangan, Dulag, Lanipao, Panoroganan and Mandulog.

Aside from violence that could arise from clan wars or *rido*, Darimbang said the police were also worried about the reported occasional presence of armed groups in some of these villages.

He said the armed groups, mostly from Kapai, Lanao del Sur, have been passing by these villages.

"(Our force) is not enough, that's why we will request for augmentation," Darimbang said.

The city police has only about 290 personnel and most of them had already been given assignments.

"With the additional troopers, we can ensure the safety and peace of the city during the elections." he said. *Aisha A. Echavez, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

PNP chief sacks head of C. Luzon drug rehab center

CAMP OLIVAS, Pampanga—Director General Hermogenes Ebdane Jr., Philippine National Police chief, yesterday relieved the executive director of the Central Luzon Drug Rehabilitation Center (CLDRC) in Magalang in connection with the alleged maltreatment of 22 male patients last month.

Ebdane also ordered Senior Supt. Conrado Briton, a presidential appointee and CLDRC executive director, to undergo an administrative investigation to determine his "possible liability" in the abuses.

Director Jose Lalisan Jr., PNP director for personnel and records management, signed the order dated Jan. 29. The order was released only on Tuesday when Ebdane visited this regional police camp.

Ebdane cited command responsibility as the reason for the investigation of Briton.

Briton urged Ebdane to review the order, saying he was not named in any of the complaints filed by the patients. Briton said it was the Central Luzon police's investigation and intelligence division that included his name in the charges.

He said he was not surprised by the relief order.

"That's not new anymore. (Top police authorities) have been doing that to me and other police officials who are not members of the 'corporation' running the PNP," Briton said.

He declined to elaborate or name those behind what he called a campaign to oust him.

In the order, Ebdane said regional police investigators had found prima facie evidence on the charges of physical injuries and maltreatment filed by 11 of the 22 patients.

They suffered bruises and blood clots, according to a medico-legal report prepared in Camp Olivas.

The patients, in their affidavits, said PO1 Resty Astrero flogged them with a bamboo pole on Jan. 9 as punishment for smoking and drinking of liquor on Dec. 24 and Dec. 31.

Chief Supt. Vidal Querol, Central Luzon police director, relieved Astrero on Jan. 14. Also relieved were Senior Insp. Dindo Laguda, chief of the CLRDC's rehabilitation management office, and dormitory staffers SP04 Wilfredo Paed, P02 Jonathan Magcalas, P01 Eufemio Cobardo and Reynaldo Fernandez.

The patients claimed that Laguda had denied them access to their parents and lawyer. The four policemen were accused of extortion and of conspiring with Laguda.

Arayat Mayor Benigno Espino, chair of the non-government organization Sagip Bie Foundation that owns and operates the CLDRC, said he served the relief order on Briton on Wednesday morning. *Tonette Orejas, PDI Central Luzon Desk*

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INQUIRER Southern Luzon

Editor Jun Bandayrel
Bureau Chief Floreño G. Solmirano

Mangyan evacuees narrate ordeal

By Clarice Colting
Paluan, Occidental Mindoro

MAY God have mercy on us," Nanay Lina kept on repeating.

Together with six of her seven children and grandchildren, the 40-year-old Mangyan woman abandoned their house and fled to the town proper in Paluan, Occidental Mindoro. They were scared, she said. She had brought nothing but the clothes she wore the day they moved.

Nanay Lina is still worried about her family's safety and the source of livelihood they left behind—their carabao, 12 coconut trees and five mango trees.

Residents, mostly belonging to the Mangyan tribe, of Sitios Aglimasan and Talahib in Barangay Harrison in Paluan, had long lived peacefully and happily until Jan. 15, when about 300 soldiers entered their communities. Seventy-nine of them, including 50 children, left their homes soon after the military operations to flush out communist rebels began. They have since been sheltered at a hall beside the municipal building.

Around 500 other people from other villages have already fled, they said.

Quiet town

According to the residents, Paluan used to be a peaceful and quiet town, attracting tourists to its Calawagan River and the Calavite Peak.

Tricycles and bicycles rule the town center's roads. Aglimasan, 20 km away, is a three-hour banca ride or a five-hour walk through trails.

The residents survive by planting cassava, sweet potatoes, *gabi* and rice, and picking up white pebbles from the river to sell. Nanay Lina said they consumed half of the cassava harvest and sell or trade the rest for rice, fish, sugar and other needs.

It was the first time that soldiers were deployed in their town, the refugees said. "Since I was born, I have not seen people like them," Nanay Lina said. "And since I was born, this is the first time that I was frightened this much."

Fact-finding

A team from the human rights group Karapatan-Southern Tagalog left the capital town of Mamburao for Paluan on Jan. 19-27 to investigate the reported evacuation of residents there and allegations of human rights violations. On their way, nine of its members were blocked by hooded armed men, who took their mobile phones, documents and cash.

According to the mission headed by Irein Cuasay, Karapatan-ST spokesperson, several Mangyan natives and settlers from Aglimasan had earlier reported cases of abduction and alleged military harassment to the local government authorities.

The evacuees in the town proper confirmed that some residents had fled Aglimasan and Talahib as early as Jan. 15, the day they said the government soldiers arrived in a Navy ship and helicopters.

Other families were not allowed by the military to leave, the mission learned. "They were not allowed to walk directly from their sitio to the town proper," it said. It quoted one of the residents as saying that he was able to leave by taking the longer route—a three-hour walk to Sitio Mananao and a five-hour walk farther to the town proper.

Others reached the town proper by boat on Jan. 21 and sought shelter at the St. Joseph Parish Church compound. Later, Mayor Shirley Pangilinan took the refugees under her custody and transferred them to a hall beside the municipal hall on Jan. 24.

"We are able to sleep here," Nanay Lina said when interviewed at the parish. "Our fear has somewhat been lessened."

Maj. Jose Broso, spokesperson of the Southern Luzon Unified Command, has denied allegations of human rights violations committed by the military. He pointed out that military officers held a dialogue with some of the residents on Jan. 24.

Broso advised victims to formally file their complaints so that these could undergo due process. "We will not let the erring personnel to remain in the organization," he said.

The military operations in pursuit of New People's Army (NPA) members will continue in Paluan, he said.

In her talk with the evacuees, Mayor Pangilinan denied any holdup incident ever taking place in her town. The people are secured while sleeping, even with the windows of their house open, she added.

A BOAT carrying villagers displaced by military operations arrives at the Paluan town proper in Occidental Mindoro. CLARICE COLTING

LIBERATO Lutero with his wife Chuchi and nine-year-old son John Leo, cries during a recent press conference in Quezon City. JOAN BONDOC

Support

On Jan. 22, a consultation meeting was held among local government officials, members of other government agencies, people's organizations, church groups and concerned citizens, together with the Karapatan-ST members and the evacuees.

The residents were surprised by the accounts of the evacuees. Some cried and pledged to give financial and material assistance.

Nanding Gatmaitan, a 30-year-old Mangyan, said he was taken from his house allegedly by military men at about 11 a.m. of Jan. 15. He was brought to a nearby house, together with his cousin Dante. When asked if he had seen an NPA member, he said no.

But one soldier allegedly hit Gatmaitan's knee with a bolo and placed the blade on his neck. Four other soldiers allegedly took turns hitting his belly and sides with rifle butts.

Later, Gatmaitan said he was brought to the place of a certain Liberato Lutero nearby. Outside the house, he said he was placed inside the trunk of a tree, was ordered to climb a tree and left under the heat of the sun. He was freed only at around 6 p.m.

In its report, the fact-finding team learned that Dante Ulayan, a 25-year-old Mangyan, had a similarly harrowing experience. Two military men allegedly went to his house at around 10 a.m. of Jan. 15 and roused him from his sleep by hitting him with a rifle butt.

The report said Ulayan was brought to a secluded area where more soldiers were waiting. During the interrogation, he was allegedly struck with rifles and kicked him after every question.

He was then ordered to remove his clothes, blindfolded and ordered to wrap his arms around a tree, it said. A loaded gun was pointed at his neck. Then, he was allegedly ordered to put his arms around another tree and then the end of a rifle was stuck in his behind.

Ulayan was allowed to leave at around 6 p.m., but on condition that he brought the soldiers a chicken, the mission said. Because of intense fear, he did return, it said.

Nanay Lina said she almost could not sleep when the soldiers arrived in her village. They would come even during the night, she said.

She said she "could no longer go farther (to the farms)" and had already neglected their crops.

The woman said the soldiers had not harmed them.

12 cases

Cuasay said her group had documented 12 cases of human rights violations, among them the forcible evacuation of 19 families, harassment, and physical and psychological torture.

She said the team also found Lutero's house ransacked and its walls removed.

The fear among the refugees was visible when they heard a helicopter hovering on Jan. 24. Children in the compound of the St. Joseph Parish Church stopped playing, looked in the sky and scampered toward their dwellings. They reacted the same way when some soldiers who wanted to interview the refugees arrived.

Nanay Lina said she was shivering in fear when she heard the helicopter.

A proposal was presented to pass resolutions and petitions with the local government units, seeking support for the victims, ensuring their security and safe return to their homes, and calling for the pullout of the military from their communities.

A memorandum of agreement was signed by members of Karapatan-ST and two representatives of the evacuees. On Jan. 25, Pangilinan said she would review the document before giving her approval. The document states that the mayor will ensure the security and welfare of the evacuees, which will be monitored by Karapatan-ST.

The local police chief has yet to act on the memorandum.

On Jan. 27, a peace dialogue was held at the Capitol Multi-Purpose Hall in Mamburao, attended by representatives of local government units, church groups, people's organizations, Karapatan-ST and concerned citizens.

Petition

They signed a petition calling for the immediate removal of all military checkpoints in the province, the investigation of reported cases of human rights violations, and indemnification and rehabilitation of the victims and their reintegration in their communities.

Rev. Samuel Sonio, district superintendent of the United Methodist Church (UMC), said during the dialogue that the UMC was against "militarization."

The social principles of the UMC, he said, stated that they "support and extend the ministry of the Church to those persons who conscientiously oppose all war" and "reject national policies of enforced military service as incompatible with the gospel."

Cuasay said her group had invited Pangilinan and other town officials, including the victims, to a meeting, but they did not arrive. She said her group had received reports that the military was circulating a petition stating that the residents wanted the soldiers to remain in town.

Nanay Lina said that as long as the military remained in their communities, they would not go back home.

Townsfolk rally against rebs, leftists

By Delfin T. Mallari Jr.
Lucena City

RESIDENTS and local government officials of Paluan town in Occidental Mindoro have assailed the presence of communist rebels and members of leftist groups who, they say, are "intruding" in their community.

"Ang Karapatan ng mga taga-Paluan ang Dapat Masunod" (The Rights of the People of Paluan should be Upheld) and "Bayan Muna, Karapatan, Galamay ng Teroristang CPP-NPA-NDF" (Bayan Muna, Karapatan, Tentacles of the Terrorist CPP-NPA-NDF) read some of the placards displayed during the Jan. 28 rally of the residents.

The placards referred to the party-list group Bayan Muna and the human rights organization Karapatan, which military officials have alleged to be fronts of the Communist Party of the Philippines, the New People's Army, and the National Democratic Front.

Military personnel shot a video of the rally and showed the footage to journalists based in Lucena City in Quezon last week.

Maj. Jose Broso, spokesperson of the Southern Luzon Unified Command, said about 1,000 local officials, students, teachers, indigenous peoples, farmers and fishermen joined the indignation rally at the *poblacion* (town proper).

"With no more civilians to support them, the communist insurgents in this part of Mindoro is now a lost cause," Broso boasted.

In a program held at the town's covered court, Mayor Shirley Pangilinan said she did not see why Kaparatan activists from Manila would troop to her town.

Pro-military

"Our town is peaceful. But our place now is full of tension," she told Manila-based broadcast journalists in the video footage. "With the present situation here, we'd like the military to stay."

On Jan. 14, soldiers reportedly found an NPA base and training compound in a mountainous area of Paluan.

Pangilinan said she did not know of the presence of the rebel camp, or of "evacuees" from the area who had fled because of alleged military atrocities.

"Based [on] my own investigation, there were no incidents of mass evacuation of Mangyan and other residents in the area due to massive military operations," the mayor said.

But she admitted that the local government had taken into custody 26 displaced families from Barangay Harrison.

Irene Cuasay, spokesperson of Karapatan-Southern Tagalog, scoffed at Pangilinan's "scheming ignorance of the true plight of the evacuees."

"She's just saving her face because it is our group who first responded to the cries of her terrified constituents due to massive military operations," Cuasay said. "The mere fact that she [Pangilinan] has a group of refugees in her custody justifies our claims that the people in the affected areas were leaving their homes due to military operations."

She claimed that local officials led by Pangilinan prevented a group of evacuees from leaving the town to join a Karapatan group to Manila. "But we have some evacuee families who slipped [through] their dragnet. They are willing to testify before any investigating body."

Pangilinan belied claims by militant groups that six heavily armed men wearing fatigue uniforms, combat shoes and bonnets as masks robbed a member of Karapatan last week while traveling from Paluan to the capital town of Mamburao.

"There was no holdup incident," the mayor told the crowd during the rally.

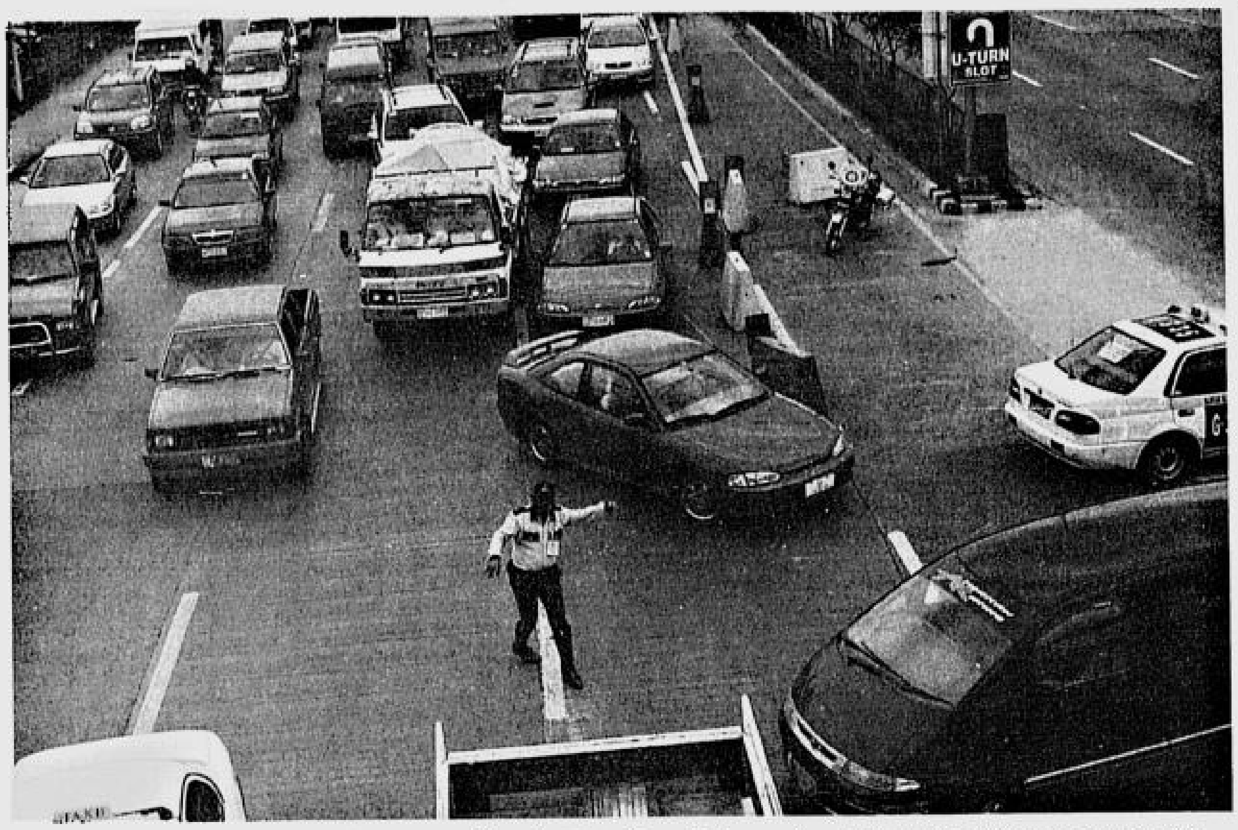
Cuasay, however, said the incident had already been reported to police authorites in Mamburao and Paluan. "We're now preparing all the necessary documentation for the filing of criminal charges against the culprits, which we believe are members of the military," she said.

Pangilinan noted that Karapatan was "being too insistent in penetrating our place for reasons that only they themselves knew. They do not even bother to coordinate with my office."

In a telephone interview, Gov. Jose Villarosa (Lakas) admitted that Occidental Mindoro had an insurgency problem, "but it does not warrant the deployment of battalion-sized contingent of the Armed Forces."

MMDA ordered to spare Katipunan trees

By Tina Santos



A LONE traffic enforcer valiantly tries to control the chaotic traffic on Katipunan Ave. in front of the Ateneo University. The MMDA's road scheme on Katipunan has come under considerable fire from residents and environment groups. ERNIE U. SARMIENTO

THE TREES that are left standing on Katipunan Avenue in Quezon City may yet be spared.

Quezon City Regional Trial Court Judge Marlene Gonzales Sison recently issued a temporary restraining order stopping the Metro Manila Development Authority from further "cutting, injuring, damaging, balling, uprooting and transferring" the remaining trees on the avenue.

Sison said the TRO would remain in effect until the petition of the Concerned Citizens Against Pollution (Cocap) has been resolved.

"We're very happy with the decision," Ester Perez de Tagle, founder of Cocap, said.

The trees have rights, too

De Tagle added that the trees, too, have their constitutional rights.

"At least, even for the meantime, abusive public officials like (MMDA chair Bayani) Fernando would not be able to touch the trees."

But De Tagle said that they still have to wait for the court's decision on their petition for a writ for preliminary injunction.

She said the granting of the injunction would permanently bar the MMDA from cutting down trees in the area.

Records showed that in a previous meeting attended by President Macapagal-Arroyo, Fernando and representatives of environment groups and schools in the area, it was agreed that the MMDA would stop uprooting the trees and that the petitioners would no longer pursue their petition for a TRO.

U-turn scheme

Despite the agreement, the petitioners claimed that the MMDA continued to implement their tree-cutting activities on Katipunan.

The MMDA started to remove the service island in the middle of Katipunan Ave.—and the trees that were planted on it—to give way to the agency's clearway project or U-turn scheme.

The project has been roundly criticized by residents, environment groups and university officials in the area.

According to a study conducted by the Technical Working Group—engineers and landscape architects who are all residents of Katipunan—the construction of U-turn slots in the area is simply not feasible.

Soft solutions

The professionals cited that the median is too narrow and leaves a short weaving section on the avenue—not enough for a large volume of vehicles. They also said that there is not enough room to turn, even with the removal of the service islands.

The study on the traffic problem in the area was conducted over a period of six months.

Among the soft solutions the professionals came up with were: synchronized traffic signals; prohibition of parking on service roads; relocation of vendors and hawkers; issuance of one car pass per household; and construction of bicycle lanes and path walks.

Caloocan City PUV drivers fight over road

By Edson Tandoc Jr.

IT WAS tricycle drivers against jeepney drivers in Caloocan City yesterday.

For several hours, passengers going to Manila were stranded as drivers plying the Malabon/Navotas to Recto route went on strike after tricycle drivers prevented them from passing through the city's 5th Avenue.

Fearing for their safety after tricycle drivers allegedly threatened to maul them or puncture their tires, jeepney drivers were forced to reroute using Del Mundo Street going to 2nd Avenue.

However, they fell prey to traffic enforcers who charged them for being out of line.

Members of the Fifth Avenue West Tricycle Operators and Drivers Association, denied threatening the jeepney drivers but admitted wanting the jeepneys off 5th Avenue because they had been losing passengers to them.

The jeepney drivers, however, did not want the reroute because it would inconvenience them and their passengers, who would have to take more rides and spend more on fare.

By 2:30 p.m., Marcelo Bulante, president of one of the three Malabon (Navotas)-Recto jeepney drivers organizations, announced a resolution to the problem.

Bulante said he and the tricycle drivers' leaders agreed to allow the jeepney drivers to pass through 5th Avenue but only up to Del Mundo where they should turn right.

The tricycle drivers also promised to stop threatening the jeepney drivers.

METROBRIEFS

PGH hostage taking

A 41-YEAR-OLD psychiatric patient held hostage at 10:30 a.m. yesterday a 21-year-old woman visitor to the Philippine General Hospital in Manila. Claiming hospital authorities were selling human body parts and cadavers, Francis Alaras broke a bottle and used it to hold Kathleen Rose Velayo hostage inside the trauma ward. He surrendered to Chief Insp. Hilario Oralla. Velayo was unhurt. Investigator PO1 Jay Santos said Alaras previously attempted suicide, which was why he was taken to the hospital.

Leila Salaverria

Gangster lynched

YOYOY Gomez, an alleged member of a robbery gang, was killed by an angry mob yesterday after he shot barangay kagawad Leonardo Pemantera in Sampaloc, Manila. Gomez reportedly went to the Fernando Billiard Hall on Prudencio Street at 12:10 a.m. and shot Pemantera in the right leg with a handgun. Bystanders pounced on the suspect, whom they mauled, threw down a flight of stairs and bashed in the head with a chunk of broken pavement. Pemantera reportedly got the ire of Gomez and his gang for exposing their alleged illegal activities.

Leila Salaverria

Pakistani detained

PAKISTANI Mohammad Mubasnir Khan, 25, has been detained by the Coast Guard after he allegedly tried to enter the country illegally through Tawi-tawi. Coast Guard spokesperson Lt. Armand Balilo said Khan, who was first barred from entering the county last month, would be turned over to the Bureau of Immigration.

Leila Salaverria

Ateneo confers service awards

THE ATENEO de Manila will honor today its University Service Awardees at the Ateneo High School Covered Courts in Quezon City.

The award is given to employees—faculty, administration, non-teaching personnel—who have served the university over the years.

Among this year's special awardees are Fr. Bienvenido Nebres, S.J., president, who has taught at the ADMU for 30 years; Fr. Roque Ferriols, S.J., of the Philosophy Department; and lawyer Cipriano Maribojoc, grade school director for administration.

Ferriols and Maribojoc have both worked at the ADMU for 40 years.

Ferriols, who says teaching gives him a special sense of fulfillment because it is both an intellectual and spiritual act, said, "There is something to celebrate for continuing to do work you have done for a long time."

Ailing convict has special room waiting for him in Bilibid

By Margaux Ortiz and Tina Santos

CONVICTS, even those who are terminally ill, would have to do their recuperation behind bars—prison authorities have seen to that.

Supt. Venancio Tesoro, National Bilibid Prisons penal chief, said that they have constructed a special room for inmates who have undergone transplant operations like Lenido Lumanog.

Lumanog, who was convicted for the 1996 killing of Col. Rolando Abadilla, has been recuperating at the National Kidney Transplant Institute, where he underwent an organ transplant.

The New Bilibid Prisons Hospital is ready to accommodate prisoner Lumanog, according to the NBP chief.

"The NBP hospital may not have the competence to perform operations or transplants, but our medical personnel are trained to take care of patients who are on their way to recovery," Tesoro said in a phone interview.

He said the special "antiseptic room" was constructed last April when Lumanog was allowed to undergo the transplant.

Tesoro added the NBP will also allow special visiting privileges for Lumanog's family "until the prisoner (is) well enough to reintegrate with the other inmates."

Tesoro said Lumanog's wife visited him on Monday and asked for a few more days before the inmate is taken back to the NBP.

"The family wanted first to settle the hospital bills, which already amounted to P1 million," Tesoro said. "The wife was afraid that their donors would back out if Lumanog was taken back to the NBP prematurely."

Earlier, NKTI doctors revealed during an interview that the hospital condition at the NBP could be detrimental to the health of Lumanog, 47.

The NKTI nephrologists, who declined to be identified, told the INQUIRER that Lumanog—or anyone who has undergone a kidney transplant—needs to stay in an isolated room to avoid infection and complications.

"There are so many diseases at the NBP hospital," one doctor said. "The poor condition inside the penitentiary would only cause (Lumanog's) body to reject the kidney that he received. He might even die."

Lumanog claimed that even his surgeon, Dr. Cesar Casanova, and his former nephrologist, Dr. Erwin Villar, both issued a certification that he needs to stay in a place where he is not exposed to germs.

Last Saturday, some NBP officials tried to take Lumanog out of legal confinement at the Quezon City hospital and haul him back to the national penitentiary.

They claimed that the order to bring in Lumanog came from NBP head Supt. Venancio Tesoro.

Tesoro's order was based on the certification of NKTI director Dr. Enrique Ona, who said Lumanog was fit for discharge.

The arresting team was able to produce a discharge slip for Lumanog, signed by a Dr. Baloloy. It did not, however, bear the signature of Lumanog's attending physicians.

Lumanog was transferred to NKTI upon the request of the NBP hospital.

SC affirms Vizconde conviction

ON TARGET

Ramon Tulfo

MY MOLE in the Supreme Court says that the decision on the Vizconde massacre will be out soon.

And it's bad news for the people who appealed the lower court's decision sentencing them to life imprisonment. The high court upheld the conviction, my spy says.

If my spy's information is correct, then the high tribunal is committing a grave injustice. It should have studied the case thoroughly and objectively.

I am not a lawyer and therefore should not be questioning learned men of the law. But had the justices who reviewed the Vizconde massacre case done an objective and unemotional study of the case, they would have reached the conclusion that there was reasonable doubt—as the lawyers would say—on the guilt of the accused.

The justices should have considered the testimony of persons who said that they saw one of the principal accused, Hubert Webb, in the United States at the time the massacre took place in BF Homes in Parañaque in June 1991.

The justices should also have considered the testimony of the US State Department to the effect that Webb was in the US at the time of the massacre. Judge Amelita Tolentino did not give weight to the State Department's testimony.

The testimony of some individuals and of the State Department, as well as some pieces of evidence presented during the trial, should have raised doubts on the guilt of Webb et al.

* * *

My mole says that the first resolution on the Vizconde massacre was one of acquittal.

But for reasons only the justices who reviewed the case know, a second resolution was made affirming the conviction, according to my mole.

Usually, two resolutions are written by the Supreme Court in deciding an appealed case, my mole says. One resolution favors the petitioner, the other turns down the petition.

What made the justices change their minds?

* * *

I am writing this against the advice of some well-meaning friends. They say that I've been vilified enough, defending Hubert Webb and his co-accused. There were even insinuations that I received a substantial amount from former senator Freddie Webb to defend his son.

"Mon, you must be a masochist because if you write about it (the high court ruling), you'll again receive brickbats. Don't you pity yourself?" one friend said.

When Webb and his co-accused were convicted by Judge Tolentino, I considered it like losing a battle. But I thought that eventually, I would win the war.

Defending Hubert Webb has become an obsession for this writer. I cannot talk for the other accused, though.

I am sure Webb is innocent. I went to the United States and interviewed people who swore that the young Webb was in the US at the time the Vizcondes were being killed. Among them were neighbors of his aunt with whom he stayed; his employer at the pest control company (who came to the Philippines to testify); the landlady of the house where he stayed after he left his aunt's place; the owner of the bicycle shop who presented a receipt for Webb's purchase of a bike.

Why did I go to the US to make that interview? I did it for the "Action 9" program on RPN 9 that I co-hosted with Rey Langit and Angelique Lazo.

Now, let me throw the question back, why didn't others go to the United States to verify the young Webb's alibi? Why didn't the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) and the other TV networks send agents or reporters to the US, just like what "Action 9" did?

* * *

I'm not doing this because I'm a friend of former senator Webb. By the way, Freddie Webb and I became friends only after I started defending his son.

I don't give a hoot whether people curse me or think ill of me in my defense of the young Webb. I'm doing this upon the dictates of my conscience and principle.

I am one guy who can't look the other way while an injustice is being committed in my presence. Webb is a victim of an injustice in an unjust society.

So saying, I rest my case.

* * *

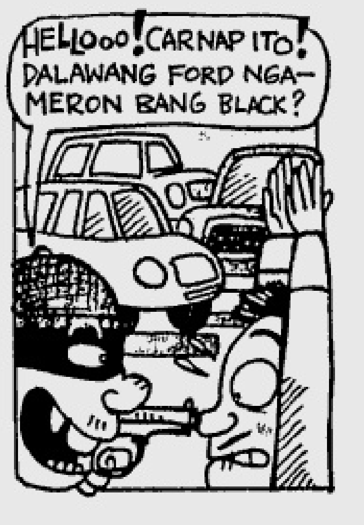
I condole with Rey Naval, my former editor and mentor at the defunct Times Journal, on the death of his wife.

Marianerie Villena-Naval, 70, died of cirrhosis of the liver on Jan. 30 at Greenville Memorial Hospital in Jersey City.

Rey and Marianerie have seven children and six grandchildren.

Robbers hit Ford branch, drive away in Expedition

By Tina Santos



HELLOoo! CARNAP ITO! DALAWANG FORD NGA—MERON BANG BLACK?

AT LEAST 10 men, including three in police uniform, yesterday hit the showroom of a car dealership branch in Quezon City and drove off with two brand new vehicles worth a total of P10 million.

Police said that the robbers also took the safety vault of the Ford Philippines branch on Edsa Balintawak corner Seminary Road, Barangay Bahay Toro, Quezon City.

Police said that at around 2 a.m. yesterday, three men in police uniform arrived at the branch on board a Toyota Revo (WTJ 562) and ordered security guards Vicente Loreco, 31, Nilo Musong, 34, and Roleto Maputol, 34, to let them in.

The robbers told the guards that they had received information that a crime was going to take place in the vicinity, according to the investigators.

As soon as the guards opened the gate, at least seven other robbers in hiding swept past the guards and immediately disarmed them.

The suspects then got behind the wheel of a fully-loaded Expedition and a silver Everest.

Some of the other robbers took the car accessories on display at the showroom, as well as the safety vault in the office. A Ford employee told police that the vault contained important documents and an undetermined amount of money.

Central Police District investigators are looking into the possibility that the robbery was an inside job.

Water cutoff in Makati, QC

MANILA Water has announced that there will be an 8-hour water service interruption in Makati due to repair of a leaking 600-mm line at the Guadalupe Bridge. The cutoff will begin at 10 p.m. tonight up to 6 a.m. Friday.

Affected areas are Guadalupe Nuevo, Guadalupe Viejo, Pitogo, Bel-Air 1-4, San Lorenzo, Urdaneta Village, Makati Commercial Center, Pio Del Pilar, South Cembo, Poblacion, Pinagkaisahan, Salcedo and Legaspi Village.

There will also be a 6-hour service interruption in Quezon City and San Juan.

The water cutoff will begin at 10 p.m. tonight up to 4 a.m. Friday.

Affected areas are E. Rodriguez, Barangay Kristong Hari, Mariana, Damayang Lagi, Salapan in Quezon City, and portions of Balon Bato, Ermitaño and Rivera in San Juan.

For updates, please call Manila Water's customer hotline 1627.

FOUR DIGIT
4 3 9 5
(In exact order)

SUERTRES
6 0 2

MEGALOTTO 6/45
2 5 26 31 35 37

METRO

E-mail: pr_metro@inquirer.com.ph

Editor **Abelardo S. Ulanday**

15 inmates bolt Rizal municipal jail

By Luige del Puerto

FIFTEEN inmates at the Rodriguez, Rizal, municipal jail sawed off the grills of their cell window and fled before dawn yesterday.

Consequently, Interior and Local Government Secretary Jose Lina Jr. dismissed jail warden Chief Insp. Pamerto Delloro and replaced him with Chief Insp. Malik Dagalangit.

According to the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology (BJMP), which administers the detention facility, the breakout occurred between 12 a.m. and 3 a.m. at one of the side cells of the jail located inside the DENR Forestry Compound in Barangay San Jose.

Hole in window

The inmates cut a 7-inch by 1-foot wide hole on their cell's window before crawling out onto the south wing portion of the jail grounds and scaling a 10-foot high wall.

Authorities believe that the escapees crossed a 30-meter clearing before disappearing into a forested area at the back of the jail.

Jailguards SJO4 Jose Minebe and JO1 Alberto Dejemel discovered the breakout during a routine inspection at 3 a.m.

Investigators later found a 4-inch long hacksaw inside the escapees' cell.

According to the office of Sr. Supt. Clarito Jover, BJMP National Capital Region assistant regional director, majority of those who escaped were facing drug charges. The rest were robbery suspects.

Drug suspects

They were identified as Eddie Mendoza, Rodel Nicolas, Nomer Loriz, Renato Guillermo, Rommel Neria, Franklin Mahinay, Derius Zafra, Jeffrey Zafra, Ferdie Orbino, Lenilo Egos, Eddie Nicolas, Alexander Gonzales, Leo Laraza, Jojie Quizona and Neyre Montes.

The Rodriguez municipal jail had more than 180 prisoners at the time of the escape.

BJMP chief Director Arturo Alit said two of the bureau's tracker teams, backed by the police, had been sent to recapture the fugitives.

No prisoner had been recovered as of 6 p.m. last night. *With a report from Nelson Flores*

291 erring lawmen suspended

By Margaux Ortiz

NO FAULT was too small as 291 lawmen were suspended last year in Makati City for offenses as simple as not attending the flag ceremony.

In a report, Makati chief of police Sr. Supt. Jovito Gutierrez said the policemen were penalized last year due to their failure to comply with "simple yet vital" provisions of the Philippine National Police policies.

The least of the penalties was a one-day suspension without pay, Gutierrez said.

Offenses

Makati police Deputy Chief Supt. Efren Ysulat said in a phone interview that the offenses included not wearing the proper uniform, failure to attend the cluster formation or flag ceremony, and incurring unauthorized absences.

Ysulat said the policemen were suspended from one to two days and made to attend a three-day moral recovery program.

He added that the moral recovery program involved spiritual activities like Bible studies and counseling conducted by the Makati City Police Counseling and Conciliation Committee.

"Though the offenses committed were only simple and minor, we want to enforce discipline on our policemen so the Makati Police Department would become a model to other police units in Metro Manila," Ysulat said.

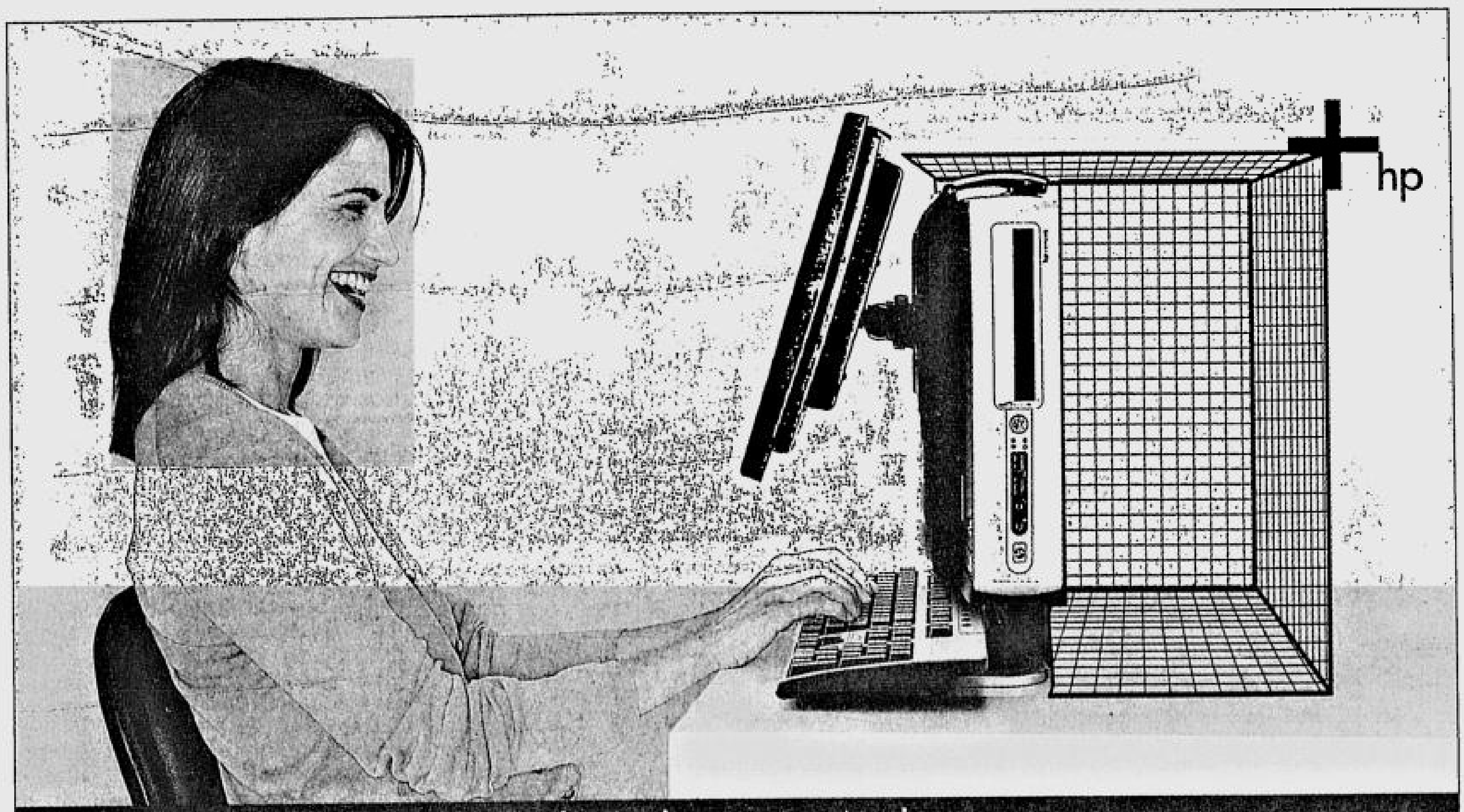
Perform well

The Makati Police Department has consistently ranked as the number one police station in the Southern Police District.

Gutierrez, in a statement, issued an appeal to all policemen assigned in Makati to reciprocate the city government's moral, technical, and financial support by improving their performance.

"The penalties imposed on these erring policemen are not meant to degrade them for disobeying simple policies and guidelines of the PNP, but rather, they serve as a reminder or a wake-up call that all policemen are duty bound to protect the public whenever our services are needed," Gutierrez stressed.

He said the policemen enjoy substantial support from the city government, including monthly allowances ranging from P1,500 and P2000, free dentures and oral care, additional gasoline allowance for their patrol cars, and modernization of their equipment.



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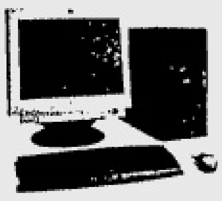

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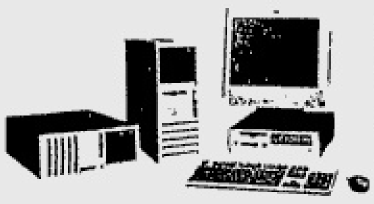

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*Source: IDC Asia/Pacific Quarterly PC Tracker, 3Q 2003

We would like to make a correction on the HP Compaq d530 Business Desktop ad released in The Philippine Daily Inquirer dated February 2, 2004. The HP-Compaq d220 Business Desktop has a speed of 48x and not 52x, as stated in the ad. Thank You.

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Compiled by L. Manguiat

BASKETBALL: NBA-Mavs vs Hornets; 9 a.m. (r-10 p.m.); Solar Sports; Blazers vs Suns; 7 p.m.; IBC 13—Dallas heads east to take on New Orleans while Pacific Division rivals Portland and Phoenix clash at America West Arena.

SWIMMING: World Cup Swimming; 12 noon; Star Sports—The world's best tankers make a big splash in preparation for the Olympics.

Schedules subject to change without prior notice.

Pinoy batters prevail

Standings

Pool A—New Zealand 6-0; Canada 5-1; Australia 3-2; Samoa 3-2; Venezuela 2-4; RP 2-4; South Africa 1-5; Netherlands 1-5.

Pool B—USA 5-0; Czech Rep 4-1; Japan 4-1; Argentina 3-2; Great Britain 1-4; Botswana 1-6; Hongkong 0-5.

CHRISTCHURCH, New Zealand—The Philippines' Blu Boys posted a 6-1 victory over the Netherlands Wednesday as they kept their backdoor bid for a quarterfinals berth in the penultimate day of eliminations in the XI Men's World Softball Championship at the Smokefree Ballpark here.

The Filipinos went to Mark Rae Ramirez, who came up with 11 strikeouts, and then bucked another injury, this time to catcher Isidro Abello, to outgun the European champions and notch their second victory against four losses.

The rest of the Blu Boys backed up Ramirez with eight hits, including three by Melvin Villegas in his three stints at bat.

Reduced to only 12 men, the Filipinos dominated the Dutch behind a three-run attack in the second inning.

Written off after successive losses, the Blu Boys suddenly found themselves nurturing hopes of crashing into the next round although they would need to hurdle newcomer Samoa Thursday to figure in a multiple tie for the fourth and last berth in the tougher section of the qualifier known as the Group of Death.

Welcoat eyes title; Sy backs Trinidad

GAME TODAY (*Pasig Sports Center*)
3:30 p.m.—Fash vs Welcoat (Game 4)

By Marc Anthony Reyes

WELCOAT Paints, neck-deep in controversies and all, will try to wrap up the PBL Platinum Cup today against Fash Dishwashing Liquid in Game 4 of their best-of-five championship series at the Pasig Sports Center.

Tagged as one of the reasons for the sudden resignation of commissioner Chino Trinidad, the Paint Masters hope to get it over with and finally nail their sixth conference title after winning Games 1 and 3 earlier this week for a 2-1 edge.

However, the issue on Trinidad's resignation will be looming over the result of the 3:30 p.m. match.

PBL chair Dioceldo Sy yesterday announced that he is rejecting the resignation of Trinidad and will even try to convince the commissioner to reconsider.

Sy also called an emergency board meeting today where, he said, the team owners will ask for an explanation from Welcoat Paint owners Terry Que and Raymund Yu and try to find out if they can be held responsible for the turn of events.

Yu immediately met with Trinidad after Game 3 and told him that the team management had nothing to do with the players' decision to wear a sticker protesting the choice of Fash's Peter June Simon as MVP instead of Paint Master Jercules Tangkay.

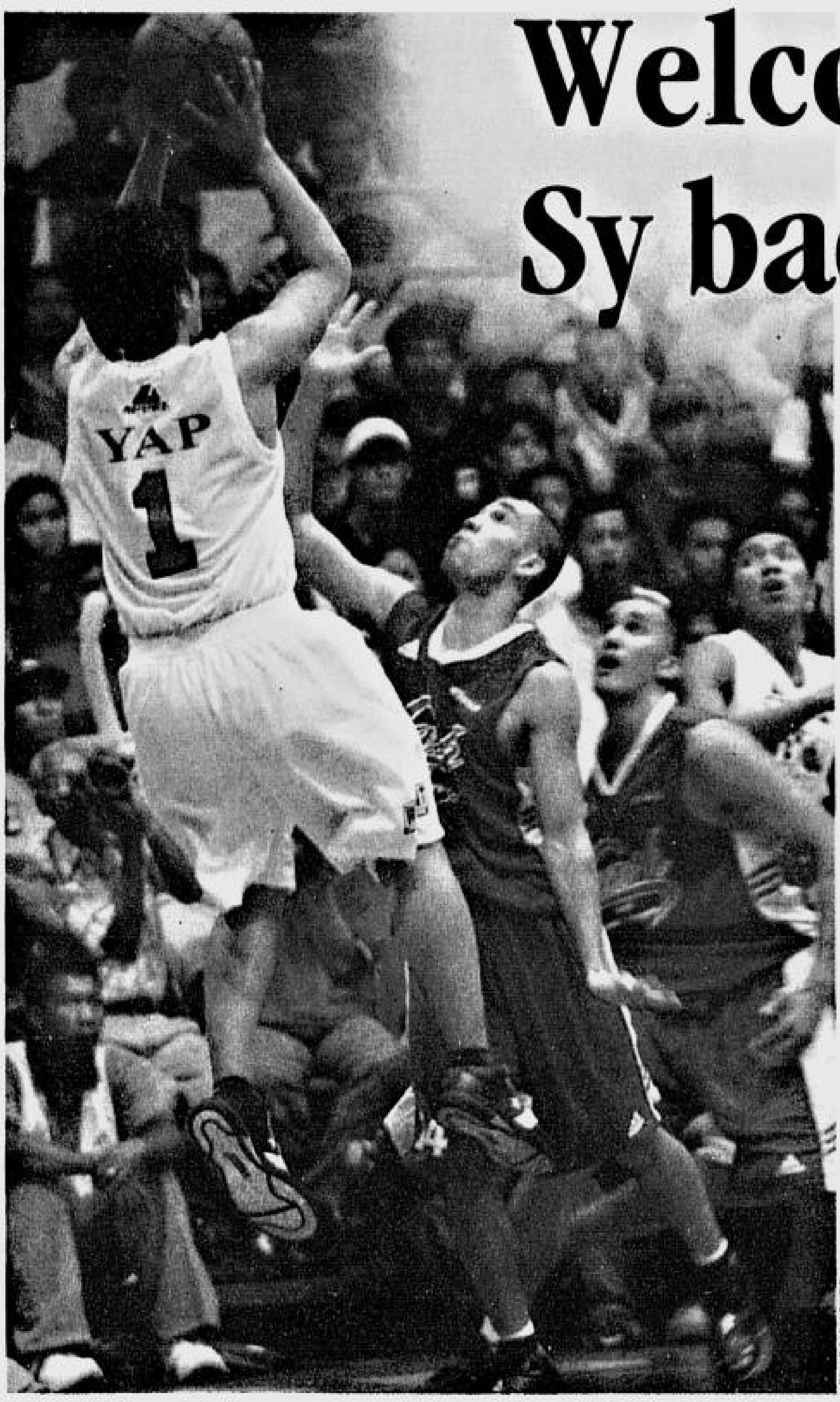
"They (players) should not have done that considering that some of them are leaving the league and joining the PBA this season," said Sy. "They should be responsible enough."

Simon himself broke his silence over the controversy, saying he will prove to everybody that he deserves the MVP trophy.

"I was hurt by their gesture," said Simon, who stirred more talks by failing to score in Game 3 right after being chosen MVP.

Fash's Bernard Yang said Simon got pressured after receiving the award, considering that the 23-year-old guard didn't expect the recognition after ranking just fifth in the statistical race. Simon nailed it after winning the media and players votes.

Trinidad, on the other hand, stood pat on his decision to end his four-year tenure as PBL chief.



ERNIE SARMIENTO

WELCOAT'S James Yap (1) attempts from rainbow territory as Fash's Niño Gelig defends. Right photo shows Simon holding the MVP trophy as Tangkay (left) looks somewhere else.

Xavier triumphs

GRAND slam champion Xavier High beat previously unbeaten St. Stephen, 61-60, as Rejan Lopez Lee scored 14 points at the start of the second round of the 28th Metro Manila Tiong Lian basketball tournament at the Chiang Kai Shek gym.

In other games, UNO High turned back Hope Christian, 78-64, as Moses Solomon scored 23 points, while Chiang Kai Shek College edged St. Jude, 68-67, with Christian Paul Lim tallying 21 points.

Rounding out first round action last week, Xavier nipped Hope Christian, 63-61, St. Stephen routed St. Jude, 101-54, and UNO dumped Chiang Kai Shek, 79-59.

Open organizers give ultimatum to Mimosa

By Jong Arcano

IS the DHL-Philippine Open golf championship heading north or south?

The possibility of the Open being held somewhere else other than the Mimosa Golf and Country Club in Angeles City surfaced as the organizing National Golf Association of the Philippines issued a shape-up-or-we-pack-up ultimatum to its host venue.

An inspection team from the NGAP is set to check on the progress of preparations at Mimosa this weekend, the results of which will be tackled in a make-or-break meeting with officials of the Clark Development Corp. on Monday.

Benny Gopez, the NGAP secretary general heading the Open's management team, has already floated the scenario of the long-delayed 88th edition of the Open being staged either at the Palmer course of the Orchard or Sta. Elena.

After a major renovation work, Orchard-Palmer is now considered one of those best-prepared to host the Open. It has also become closest to Metro Manila among the courses in the south due to a newly opened access road, Daang Hari. Sta. Elena is likewise a top candidate because of its well-maintained facilities.

Gopez had earlier expressed his disappointment over the lack of support they're getting from the Mimosa workforce.

Orchard was the site of the 1995 Johnnie Walker Classic at the height of the local golf boom where the likes of Fred Couples, Greg Norman and Nick Price set foot on local soil.

"I believe we've not been amiss in explaining to them all the job requirements for the Open. I've already told them that after this weekend, we might be forced to transfer or worse, even cancel the Open," said Gopez.

Gopez gave the Mimosa people quite a mouthful in the event's launch last week where he told the staff that they're not doing enough to ensure the success of the Open.

What could be a major snag in the NGAP's dealings with Mimosa is the resignation the club's general manager Richard Atendido. Atendido has already submitted his resignation to CDC head Emmanuel Angeles but is being asked to stay on.

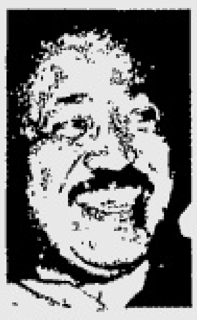
Mangubat vs Gorres

FORMER International flyweight champion Randy Mangubat, who failed to wrest the world title last year against Thai champion Pongsaklek Wonjongkam, has signed up to fight Z "The Dream" Gorres in a ten-round bout on Feb. 20 at the Makati Coliseum.

Mangubat's manager, Japanese photojournalist Yuki Murayama, said the fight is crucial to both boxers. Mangubat, who will move up to the super flyweight division for the showdown with Gorres, needs an impressive victory to gain another world title shot while Gorres needs to prove he has what it takes to be a world-beater. Gorres suffered a ninth round KO at the hands of Edgar Rodrigo on June 1 last year.

Gorres' management team of lawyer Rudy Salud and Cebu boxing patron Tony Aldeguer were convinced that Gorres suffered from having to make the 112 pound limit.

Signature drive against Buhain on, says Jaylo


JAYLO

By Marc Anthony Reyes

JUDO association president Reynaldo Jaylo yesterday said the signature campaign against Philippine Sports Commission chair Eric Buhain is continuing as talks between his group and other national sports associations are going on.

Jaylo, one of the 16 NSA heads who signed a petition paper addressed to President Arroyo asking for Buhain's ouster, said the group will meet with a major bloc in the Philippine Olympic Committee family this weekend which could decide the fate of Buhain.

The judo head also complained about the PSC's "last-minute" rejection of their financial request.

As a result, Jaylo said the annual national individual judo championship, originally set to be held this year in Zamboanga, was postponed indefinitely.

"The tournament has been regularly funded by the PSC and is one of the basis for selection of members to the national team," said Jaylo in his statement to media.

National judokas also failed to compete in the Asian Judo Championship in Korea, an Olympic qualifying event, last year because the PSC allegedly withdrew its support right "on departure date."

A call from Mat

SPECTATOR

Al S. Mendoza

MAT Defensor called me up the day my piece on the chess imbroglio came out, and that was on Tuesday. Appreciate that, Mat.

Mat, of course, is president of the National Chess Federation of the Philippines. He called to react to my column that dealt on alleged anomalies, hurled by Grandmasters Joey Antonio and Bong Villamayor, being committed by GM Eugene Torre and Sammy Estimo, the NCFP secretary general. The meat of the column was the appointment of Toti Abundo as the new NCFP executive director. I said naming Abundo to the position was not the exact solution to the gripes of Joey and Bong.

"I got your point, Al," said Mat. "I admit Toti is not the solution to the problem."

Why then did you appoint him to that position?

"It's just a temporary solution," Mat said. "Toti is neutral. He will observe things within the NCFP. He can act as the balancing factor to contentious people."

Will that mean Toti can make Joey and Bong stop hurling accusations against Eugene and Sammy in public?

"That's the whole idea," said Mat. "Toti will be there to clarify matters. He will do it in a transparent procedure."

How do you hope to make Toti that?

"He will see all parties concerned," said Mat. "He will talk to them, thresh out their differences, dig deeper into issues raised so that we can go to the root of the problems."

Was there an initial action already on the part of Toti to make both parties kiss and make up?

"Yes," said Mat. "He had met with both parties. He had talked to them. And the results, so far, were good."

There are talks that Toti's appointment had hurt the feelings of the guy he replaced, Gene Poliarco. They have asked me: Has Mat Defensor become a dictator?

"You have a point there," said Mat. "I will have a heart-to-heart talk with Gene and explain everything to him. In fact, tonight (Tuesday night), we are having a board meeting and I will explain to the board the decisions that I had just made."

You mean there was no board decision to appoint Toti as the new executive director of the NCFP?

"Yes," Mat said. "But I acted by the powers vested in me as president of NCFP. No charter provisions had been violated, I can assure you that. I'm sure the board will understand because I had to move fast because the credibility of the NCFP was at stake."

People have called me up, concerned over money accusations hurled by Joey and Bong against Eugene and Sammy. How do you intend to resolve this rather serious charge?

"Toti will have to investigate the matter and then come up with a report," said Mat. "That is a matter that needs careful study. I am sure the board will again back me up on this as the integrity of key people in the NCFP is being put to the test. Let me assure you that everything's being done with utmost care and I will update you on the progress of what we are doing. Meantime, I'll have to meet with the board to plan for our next action. Thank you and till then, podner."

Before he could hung up, I said, "Good luck, podner. And, as Graham the photographer in 'The Last Samurai' said to Tom Cruise before Tom set out to war, 'God speed.'"

And yes, Mat, may you find the check-to-mate move as you ponder on your next move. Under the circumstances, a draw is for the weak of heart.

***

FASTBREAK. Dish at Rockwell/Powerplant in Makati will feature the Spirit of '67 tomorrow, Feb. 6. Expect an SRO crowd. Spirit of '67 has transferred to Mandarin's Captain's Bar every Friday and that move has sent Dish habitues "suffering" every Tuesday... Over at Merk's Place at Greenbelt 3/Makati, I heard the Bedroom Boys have been drawing in the Sixties lovers with their Sixties gigs spiked mainly by the music of The Beatles, DC 5, Zombies, Bee Gees, Monkees, Herman's Hermits, Peter & Gordon, Kinks, Buckinghams, Animals, Cascades, Beach Boys, Doors, Playboys and Procol Harum. I hope to drop by there one of these days, God willing, and grab a bite of goat adobo while I enjoy my kind of music. This is not to exaggerate but the goat adobo at Merk's Place is the best you could ever find in Makati City.

GOLDEN WHEEL AWARDS: At the end of the racing season, each of them stood proudest on the podium, having taken the ultimate checkered flag—the overall championship. On a glitzy, rap-sy Monday evening at the Carlos P. Romulo Auditorium of RCBC Plaza in Makati City, in the first-ever recognition event for the quickest of them all in the various categories, the country's lords of motorsports feted 14 of them in front of their peers. They are (from left) Jaime Barcial (Scooters), JP Cariño (Formula Toyota), Audel Sison (Drag Racing), Jolet Jao (Superbikes), Robert Abas (4X4 Off-Road Racing), Carlos Anton (National Touring Car), Michelle Bumgarner (Karting), Pepon Marave (Asian Formula 3), Ivan Isada and navigator Art Guevarra (Rally), and Glenn Aguilar (Motocross). The other awardees are Daryl Flores (Slalom), Alex Perez (Rallycross) and Tyson Sy (Formula BMW). ROGER CARPIO

James out of All-Star

O'Neal, Kidd among reserves

NEW YORK—-LeBron James missed the cut Tuesday in voting for All-Star reserves, finishing behind Eastern Conference guards Paul Pierce, Michael Redd, Baron Davis and Jason Kidd.

"Being selected to the All-Star team, it wouldn't be nothing new to me," James said Tuesday before the 14 reserves were announced. "I've been on All-Star teams my whole life. That's just how I play the game of basketball."

The league's 29 coaches selected the reserves.

Shaquille O'Neal of the Los Angeles Lakers was among the Western Conference reserves for the league's showcase event Feb. 15 in Los Angeles.

Other All-Star reserves for the West are Dirk Nowitzki of Dallas, Peja Stojakovic and Brad Miller of Sacramento, Sam Cassell of Minnesota, Andrei Kirilenko of Utah and Ray Allen of Seattle.

The other East reserves are Jamaal Magliore of New Orleans, Ron Artest of Indiana and Kenyon Martin of New Jersey.

Redd is averaging 22.1 points for the surprising Milwaukee Bucks, Pierce is the league's sixth-leading scorer (22.9) for Boston, Davis of New Orleans had the league's fifth-highest average (23.2), and Kidd has led New Jersey to first place in the Atlantic Division.

Starters for the league's 53rd All-Star game, selected in fan balloting, are Vince Carter of Toronto, Tracy McGrady of Orlando, Ben Wallace of Detroit, Jermaine O'Neal of Indiana, Allen Iverson of Philadelphia for the East; Yao Ming of Houston, Kobe Bryant of the Lakers, Kevin Garnett of Minnesota, Steve Francis of Houston and Tim Duncan of San Antonio for the West.

Minnesota's Flip Saunders will coach the West, and Rick Carlisle of the Pacers will coach the East.

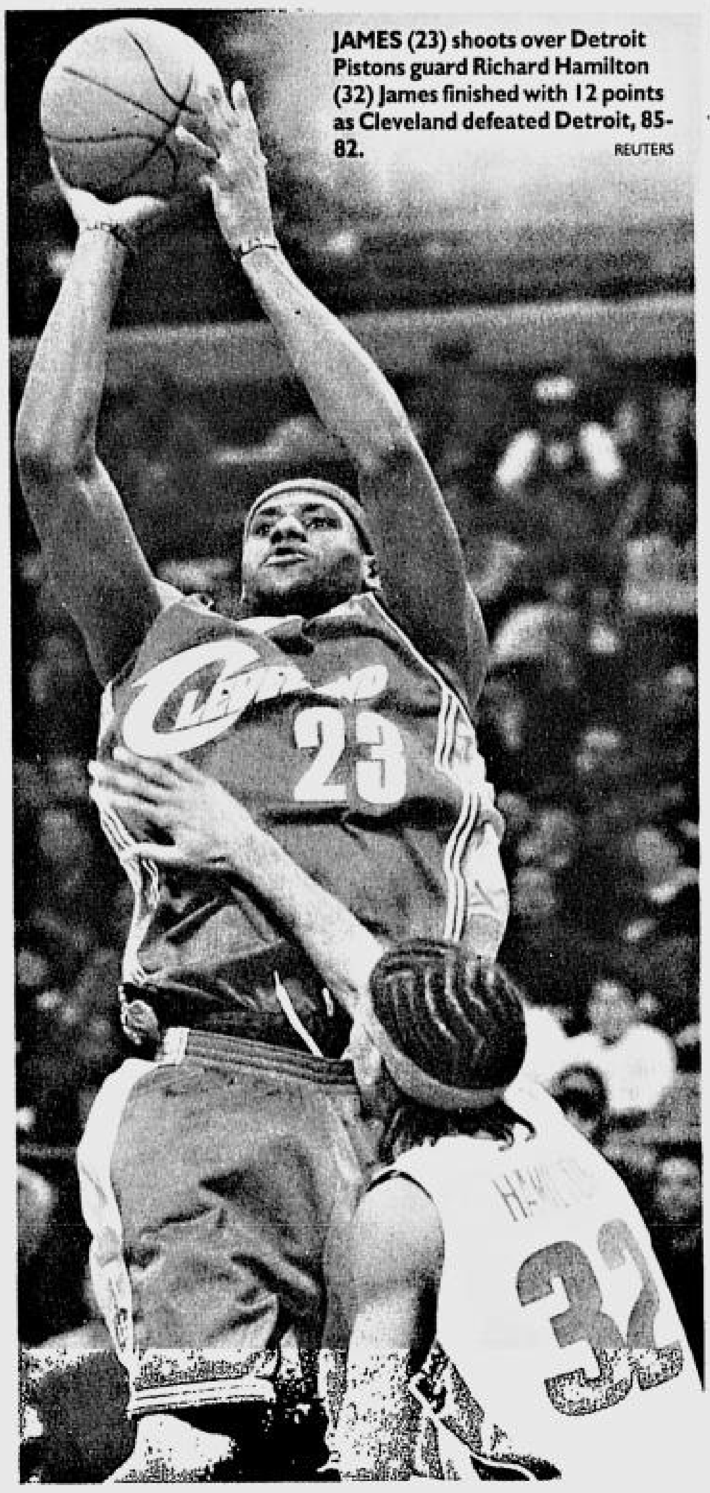
James is averaging 20.8 points, 5.9 assists and 5.9 rebounds for the Cleveland Cavaliers, whose surge of six victories in eight games has moved them into contention for a playoff spot in the East.

James is 13th in the NBA in scoring and 12th in assists, averaging 24.1 points since Cleveland traded Ricky Davis to Boston in mid-December. James, Pierce, Allen and McGrady are the only players averaging at least 20 points, five rebounds and five assists.

Cleveland coach Paul Silas said he had expected James to make the Eastern team.

Shaq back

CLEVELAND—Shaquille O'Neal had little to say. O'Neal rejoined the Los Angeles Lakers on Tuesday, one day after being suspended without pay by NBA commissioner David Stern for using profanity and publicly criticizing game officials.



JAMES (23) shoots over Detroit Pistons guard Richard Hamilton (32) James finished with 12 points as Cleveland defeated Detroit, 85-82. REUTERS

SPORTSWATCH

Black cage clinic resumes April 12

BURLINGTON Industries Phils. Inc. resumes its summer basketball camp to be conducted by multititled PBA coach and endorser Norman Black. Dubbed as Burlington Basketball Skills Camp, it will be held at Metro Gym in Mandaluyong, three times a week starting April 12. The cage clinic is open to boys and girls between the ages 10 and 18 years. Black has assembled a staff composed of ex-PBA players and former national coaches to train the enrollees. To give the participants personalized attention, the Burlington socks-sponsored event can only accommodate a limited number so registration will be on a first come, first served basis. Free balls, T-shirts, socks and other freebies await those who will enlist early. Deadline of registration is on March 15. For details, call Team, 894-3576 or 894-3014.

Roligon derby 3rd round today

THE THIRD round of "14th Anniversary 7-Cock Derby" eliminations gets going today at the Roligon Mega Cockpit. Roligon owner Rolly Ligon, derby host, has put up a guaranteed prize of P3.6 million while entry fee is P11,000. After two days of elimination and 214 fights held, a total of 16 cockers emerged as current frontrunners after posting three victories each. The leaders are Bert Arizobal, Carlos Pimentel, Boy Marzo, Madison Go, Dax Guanzon, Emitt San Juan, Allan Tan, James Uy, tabloid executive Rey Briones, ASF Group, Joseph Chuazon of Bulacan, Bro Ed, Jojo Bacar, Nonoy Gonzales of Laguna, Gerry Perez and RGEP Ilarde. According to Roligon general manager Danny Ty, 27 breeders from Negros Occidental, Cebu, Davao and Iloilo have confirmed their participation to the derby. The finals will be on Feb. 12. For more details, contact 852-98112, 852-9774, 833-2275, 833-1638 and 09203974225.

Manila cockers face Pampanga foes

BIG-TIME cockers from Metro Manila will invade Pampanga Coliseum to compete in the much-awaited "Sagupaan For the Big Boys 5-Cock Derby" on Feb. 11. For an entry fee of P22,000, the guaranteed prize at stake is P500,000. The fastest kill champion will receive P15,000. The grand showdown of Metro Manila and Pampanga's prominent cockers will be hosted by *sabong* idol Patrick Antonio and sponsored by Complexor 3000 (injectable B-complex vitamins with iron). Submission of weights is on derby day, from 7 a.m. to 10 a.m. Derby starts promptly at 5 p.m. Interested parties may contact 0917-8307812.

Women's tennis listing at Philta

DEADLINE for registration in the P50,000 Hotel Emelie All-Women Tennis Open is set at noontime today at the Philippine Tennis Association (Philta) office. Tournament referee Rene Selmar will also conduct the draw after finalizing the master list of the first-ever exclusive women's netfest set on Feb. 7-8 and 12-14, 2004 at the Rizal Memorial Tennis Center. Top RP netters Tracy Santos and Czarina Mae Arevalo are hot favorites to dispute the P10,000 champion's purse in the women's singles division in the Hotel Emelie All-Women Tennis Open supported by Milo, Adidas, Wilson balls and the PSC with Philta sanction.

Blitz open Saturday in Quezon City

A BLITZ open and chess tournament will be held on Saturday (Feb. 7) at the Project 6 Swimming Pool and Sports Complex in Quezon City. The event will be held in conjunction with the 10th birthday of kiddie player Marc Christian Nazario, whose team won the bronze medal in the Under-10 Boys category in the recent 4th Asean Age-Group Championship held in Brunei. Registration fee of P150 includes lunch and swimming. Deadline for registration is at noon on Friday. For more details, call Chi Nazario at 453-0537 or 0917-898 0437; or IM Jayson Gonzales at 454-0129, 926-1036, or 0918-530 3405. ***NM Marlon Bernardino***

Makati non-master chessfest slated

REGISTRATION for the 2nd Café Lupe Non-Master chess tournament is now in full swing at the Café Lupe Restaurant in Guadalupe, Makati City. Divided into Open (all non-masters) and Kiddies (14-under) divisions, the tournament supported by Alvin Carranza unfolds on Feb. 14-15 at Our Lady of Guadalupe Seminary gym in Guadalupe, Makati City. Entry fees are P350 (Open) and P250 (Kiddies). For inquiries, call 471-3417/27 or call/text 0922-8036106 and look for Marissa Pangilinan of the organizing Gemini Talents Corporation. ***NM Marlon Bernardino, contributor***

Cavaliers, Knicks upset NBA rivals

NEW YORK—Carlos Boozer carried the rapidly improving Cleveland Cavaliers to an upset 85-82 win over the host Detroit Pistons on Tuesday.

Boozer, an All-Rookie second teamer in 2002-03, notched 21 points and pulled down 15 rebounds to pace the Cavs, who won for the fifth time in their past six outings.

He made two crucial free throws late to seal the victory.

His teammate, rookie sensation LeBron James, said he would have to work harder after being overlooked for the All-Star Game but responded with just 12 points, a far cry from the career-high 38 he racked up in Cleveland's previous game against Washington.

In New York, Stephon Marbury racked up 23 points and Keith Van Horn added 20 and 12 rebounds as the Knicks upset the conference-leading Pacers, 97-90.

Kurt Thomas chipped in with 19 points and 12 rebounds. *Reuters*

Complete results: Toronto 93, Philadelphia 80; New York 97, Indiana 90; Cleveland 85, Detroit 82; Minnesota 113, Orlando 100; Dallas 107, Golden State 93; Sacramento 117, Seattle 101.

20th Mango Tee gets under way

THE PRESTIGIOUS Mango Tee—the member-guest invitational of the Alabang Country Club presented by Smart Communications—gets under way today with the first batch of teams playing either morning or afternoon rounds.

The first shotgun start fires off at 6 a.m. while the afternoon shotgun is at 12 noon set to be answered by the initial group of 128 out of the 512 players in the field of this 36-hole tourney spread out in four days.

The excitement level is high as any of the four Mitsubishi cars (a Lancer GLS MT on No. 6, a Space Gear on No. 8, an L200 Pick Up on No. 12, an Outlander on No. 15) at stake for a hole-in-one on all the par-3s of the course might be won on Day One.

"We've worked so hard for this tournament and nothing beats the satisfaction of seeing the happy faces of members and guests who are joining us this week," said Mango Tee committee chair Ed Lacson.

Former president Fidel V. Ramos and his guest partner Bobby de Ocampo head the member-guest tandems vying for honors. Acci president Pablo de Borja is paired with Philip Judan, Acci chair Gil Yuzon is bringing in Ariel Ong and Lacson has Gerry Limlingan for his teammate.

MANGO TEE
20th
ALABANG

FORMER president Fidel Ramos, a Mango Tee participant, flashes his trademark thumbs-up sign with Boy Martirez of Smart and Alabang's Paul Cortez and Jimbo Inigo.

Mitsubishi Motors Philippines, Pilipinas Shell, Taylormade adidas, Citimotors and Allied Domecq/Carlos I are the major sponsors of the Mango Tee. Sharp, Standard Chartered Bank, The Turf Co. and Food Link are area sponsors and FedEx, Nestle, Pepsi and Security Bank/Diners Club are premium sponsors.

Hole sponsors are Acro Industrial, Ayala Greenfiels Estate, Beacon Environmental Mgt., Club 515, City Service Corp., East West Bank, General Milling Corp., GG&A, Golfers Club Shares Inc., Haji Andi Tabusalla, Joseph Rice Center, MIS Maritime, Palms Point, PNCC Skyway, Prudential Life, Safe Seas Shipping, San Miguel, T&C Construction, Tanduay, The Bellevue, True Value, Unilab/Enervon and YKK Zipper Phils. Par Options Corp., Gainer's Marketing, Maisog Engineering Works and Anthony's wine are minor sponsors.

To be disputed are the overall title, which Ernest Villareal will try to defend with new partner Al Cusi, the low gross crown currently held by OV Espiritu and Tommy Manotoc and the top awards in Class A, Class B, Class C and Class D.

There will be nightly cocktails starting tonight all the way to the final day with entertainment and raffle. Log on acci.com.ph where the near-real time reporting of the results will be posted.

Ateneo, La Salle-Zobel pace Interscholastics

ATENEO, La Salle-Zobel, St. Benedict and Miriam paced their respective divisions after the penultimate round of the second Samsung Interscholastics golf championships at the Manila Southwoods Legends course.

Ateneo's Vendric Tan (32), Don Padilla (31) and John Gobing (30) combined for 93 points to post a 36-hole aggregate of 179, stretching their lead to 12 points over La Salle, which tallied 85-167.

With Miko Alejandro and Justin Tambunting leading the attack, La Salle-Zobel amassed 94 points for 186 and an eight-point spread in the high school boys play. La Salle-Greenhills made 89 for the second straight day and was at 178.

St. Benedict's John Kier Abdon, JR Gonzales and Don Martin Fernandez led Ateneo 2 by seven in the grade school boys and Miriam College, represented by Marie Dhel dela Paz, Riva Maria Galveztan and Erika Salinas, was up by 11 in the combined high school-college girls play.

The individual leaders were Brixton Aw of the College of St. Benilde (college boys), Alejandro and Miko Yee of LSGH-A (high school boys), Debbie de Villa of GSCF (college-high school girls), Abdon (grade school boys) and Christina Potenciano of Poveda (grade school girls).

Yee's 33 points pulled him into a tie with Alejandro (32) at 68 in a close fight for the individual plum. Just a stroke back is Tambunting who had a 33 for 67.

Aw's total of 70 pulled him five ahead of Tan, Abdon's 62 gave him a one-point lead over Xavier's Joaquin Arroyo and Wolen Superal of Golden Acres; de Villa went four up on Crystal Faith Superal of Las Pinas High with her 62 and Ramos (38) moved up by four on James Ricohermoso.

Tours, Leisure & Chow

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Alden Joshua Cedo, Graphics Design

Aries Espinosa, Editor

Valentine Toast at New World Renaissance Hotel

SPEND an unforgettable Valentine's celebration at the New World Renaissance Hotel as the deluxe property offers wonderful choices for a most romantic fête on Feb. 13 and 14.

The hotel's premier continental restaurant Bocarinos provides the perfect ambience combined with creative continental cuisine prepared by expert chefs. A special Romeo and Juliet Chef's Table Dinner Menu is offered at P1,800+ per person. This includes a complimentary glass of champagne and a box of chocolate truffles for couples as a memento. Live jazz music adds to the romantic atmosphere.

The bustling Coffee Shop will be the center of Valentine activity as it offers the Romance Dinner Buffet at P950+ per person with a live musical trio serenading coosome couples. A complimentary glass of Bellini caps the sumptuous dinner buffet while a rose is given to the ladies.

At the premier Cantonese restaurant Emperor Court, an impressive dinner buffet of the best of Chinese regional fare is offered at P950+, accompanied by live music. A sweet souvenir of chocolate truffles and a long stemmed rose is given to the ladies.

For light meals for the rest of the evening, the Passion Appetizer menu is offered at the cozy Lobby Lounge. Musical entertainment sets a romantic mood after dinner starting at 8 p.m. Guests get a complimentary glass of bubbly, plus a rose for the ladies.

For the utmost romantic getaway, avail of the hotel's Valentine's Room Special package at P3,500++ in a deluxe room that includes buffet breakfast for 2 persons at the Coffee Shop, a bottle of wine, chocolates and a long stemmed rose for the lady. Limited availability and price is subject to 10% service charge and prevailing government tax.

For more information and reservations on the New World Renaissance Hotel's Valentine offerings, please call 811-6888.

The hotel's premier continental restaurant Bocarinos provides the perfect ambience combined with creative continental cuisine prepared by expert chefs.

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Celebrating love at Dusit Hotel Nikko

WHAT more romantic way to spend Valentine's Day than to escape from the hustle and bustle of life and set your hearts on fire at Dusit Hotel Nikko.

With the hotel's elegant bed and breakfast providing the setting, you shall be overwhelmed by an experience to be remembered for a lifetime with the Valentine Romantic Getaway Package. For only P5,555 net for two persons, guests will enjoy an overnight stay in a deluxe room with buffet breakfast at the Café or room service breakfast, Saturday afternoon tea, etc.

To make your Valentines' complete, Dusit Hotel Nikko's specialty restaurants offer set dinners or buffet. Available from Feb. 13-14, Valentine special set dinners at Benjarong, Benkay, Thine Duong, Fiesta San Miguel and Ciao are pegged at P1,200++ per person while buffet at The Café is pegged at P950++ for adults and P475++ for kids below 12 years old.

The Lobby Lounge of the hotel offers a Valentine cocktail drink on Feb. 13-14 while the Deli Shop offers Valentine goodies for the whole month of February. For queries and reservations, please call 867-3333.

Zensational suite Valentine at Astoria Plaza

BE THE "zensational" apple of your lover's eye and celebrate the difference this season of hearts. Experience world-class amenities and first-class services at unbelievable rates with Astoria Plaza's "Zensational Suite Valentine" room promo.

Check-in with your special someone in a one-bedroom suite for only P4,950 net and impress him or her with splendid overnight room accommodations, complimentary breakfast for two, candlelight dinner for two inside the suite with romantic serenade and full butler service, a surprise Valentine gift, complimentary use of the gym and pool, free local newspapers and 10% discount at Stresscape Spa. Express check-in is available upon request.

Two-bedroom suites for family and friends are also available for only P5,750 net. Be treated to complimentary breakfast for four, free use of the gym and pool, dinner for four with special Valentine cocktails, free local newspapers and 10 percent discount at Stresscape Spa. Be a class on your own and try Astoria Plaza's special Valentine room promo and be forever cherished. Promo valid from Feb. 9 to 15.

Located at 15 J. Escriva Drive, Ortigas Business District, Pasig City, Astoria plaza may be reached at (02)687-1111 or visit www.astoriaplaza.com.

Make it Alabang. Make it Bellevue

SO GOES the catchphrase of Alabang's definitive social and business hub, where unique events and special deals happen everyday. This coming Valentine's Day, The Bellevue throws out an irresistible treat for inseparable sweethearts.

The Amore Dinner Buffet at Café D' Asie from February 13-14 offers a sumptuous spread of tasty dishes made by the hotel's culinary geniuses. Dine in an air of romance and elegance at the hotel's main dining area and set the mood for an unforgettable evening.

The Amore Package for P3,000++ can be availed on February 12-16. Couples are entitled to breakfast for two, rose bath, sparkling wine, tempting chocolates and late checkout. With only an additional P2,000++, guests can avail a suite upgrade and experience the opulence that is Bellevue.

Pairs can also head to Alabang's hottest nightly rendezvous, the Bellevue's 20/20 entertainment center on February 14 for a night of music and romance. The Amore Concert presents leading jazz and lounge acts for only P300 net entrance fee. Spend this special day with the most special person in your life, only at Alabang's social and business destination of choice-The Bellevue Hotel.

Reliving the memories... continuing the legacy

A VISIT to Tagaytay is never complete without enjoying the breathtaking sight of Taal lake and volcano, complemented by the former Taal Vista Lodge. For most visitors, the breathtaking view enthralls, if not inspires, people from all walks of life.

This landmark is the destination of choice for its unmatched panorama of Tagaytay's environs as well as its place in the hearts and memories of locals and tourists throughout its 70 years of existence. Today, the nostalgia is felt again with its splendid rebirth as Taal Visita Hotel. It has revived itself as a place to savor the fine pleasures of hotel living, dining, luxury and relaxation.

It has 80 guestrooms, all offering spectacular views of the verdant gardens, the Taal lake and volcano, and are fully equipped.

For the gourmands, the hotel's Café-On-The-Ridge has a menu distinctly highlighting Europe's simple elegance, Spain's sunny disposition and the Asian mystique. The Lobby Lounge, with its fireplace and vaulted ceilings, recaptures the grand era of the Tudor House. The well-stocked bar is ideal for entertaining and socializing as the tropical sun sets in the evening.

For inquiries and reservations, call 889-5046 and 889-1000 or contact the hotel directly at (046) 413-1000 or visit its website at www.barcelo-asia.com.

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5 A TALE OF TWO SISTERS 11:20, 1:40, 4:00, 6:20, 9:00
6 THE LORD OF THE RINGS: THE RETURN OF THE KING 10:30, 12:50, 4:50, 9:00
7 BROTHER BEAR 10:50, 12:50, 2:50, 4:50, 6:50, 9:00 DTS
8 THE TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE 10:50, 12:50, 2:50, 4:50, 6:50, 9:00

Big R Supercenter NOVALICHES / FAIRVIEW
935-3229 / 31

1 THE LAST SAMURAI 10:40, 12:05, 2:50, 5:35, 8:30
2 MONA LISA SMILE 11:20, 1:35, 3:50, 6:05, 8:30
3 A TALE OF TWO SISTERS 10:30, 12:10, 2:30, 4:50, 7:10, 9:00
4 STUCK ON YOU 10:30, 12:10, 2:30, 4:50, 7:10, 9:00
5 BROTHER BEAR 11:20, 1:05, 2:50, 4:35, 6:20, 8:10
6 THE TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE 11:20, 1:35, 3:50, 6:05, 8:30
7 IN THE CUT 11:20, 1:35, 3:50, 6:05, 8:30
8 LORD OF THE RINGS: THE RETURN OF THE KING 10:35, 12:40, 4:05, 7:45

Citisquare MALABON
288-0985/2575

1. MAPUSOK
2. TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE
3. THE LAST SAMURAI
4. MONA LISA SMILE

big Supercenter CAINTA
240-4661

1. TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE
2. MONA LISA SMILE
3. BROTHER BEAR
4. THE LAST SAMURAI

Big R Supercenter STA. ROSA
Laguna (049)837-0907

1. MONA LISA SMILE
2. THE TWINS EFFECT
3. PURI
4. DIABLO
5. THE LAST SAMURAI

Big R Supercenter LIPA
757-3664 / 312-5870

1. THE LAST SAMURAI
2. BROTHER BEAR
3. PURI
4. A TALE OF TWO SISTERS
5. LOTR: RETURN OF THE KING

Big R Supercenter DASMARIÑAS
852-2125

1. PURI
2. THE LAST SAMURAI
3. A TALE OF TWO SISTERS
4. STUCK ON YOU
5. BROTHER BEAR

Big R Supercenter STARMILLS
San Fernando, Pampanga
875-1927 / 961-5270

1. MONA LISA SMILE
2. PURI
3. HAUNTED OFFICE
4. DIABLO
5. TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE
6. THE LAST SAMURAI

IMUS
471-8188 / 875-5858

1. TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE
2. THE LAST SAMURAI
3. STUCK ON YOU
4. MONA LISA SMILE DTS
5. DIABLO
6. A TALE OF TWO SISTERS

BACOLOD
441-0458/59

1. MYSTIC RIVER
2. THE LAST SAMURAI
3. BRIDAL SHOWER
4. LORD OF THE RINGS: THE RE-
5. TURN OF THE KING
6. KILL BILL

ILOILO
336-8070/78

1. LOTR: RETURN OF THE KING
2. SKY OF LOVE
3. THE LAST SAMURAI
4. KILL BILL
5. PURI
6. THE TWINS EFFECT

mona lisa smile
LAST SAMURAI

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Magic Kitchen
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MOVIES/SCHEDULES/PRICES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE.

'Electile' last run tonight

THE POLITICAL satire "Electile Dysfunction" will have its last run tonight at 8 p.m. at the Music Museum.

Set in an airplane that promptly crashes as soon as it takes off with presidentiables Fernan Bopol Jr., Coco Banco, Dagul Loco, Paltik Pinky Lason and Ate Flow Makapidal Ayoko on board, the show is an amazing collage of barbershop tales, tabloid headlines and legitimate news items that are brought out during the exchanges between the angel and the five candidates.

Now, the presidentiables are face to face with God, played by Boy Abunda, who is wearing a golden wig and talking to a bouncy angel, portrayed by Chari Arespacochaga.

The angel tells God that all the presidentiables have perished in the plane crash. To the angel's consternation, she is given the task of helping determine, who among the five deserve to live and be the president of the Philippines.

As Fernan Bopol Jr. and his best friend Erap discuss their fates, along comes Coco Banco. Pretty soon, strings are tied around the hands and feet of Bopol by Erap, as Coco binds the hands and feet of Erap. Coco then pulls the strings, and both Bopol and Erap dance to his music.

With name performers, veteran producers, and director Leo Rialp at the helm of the show, cynics will find that they can laugh again even as the peso sinks further against the almighty US dollar.

Tickets at P800 and P650 are available at Music Museum and all Ticketworld outlets.

For inquiries on tickets and for those interested in buying the show, call Jac. B. Nimble and In Focus Productions at 843-3503, 843-3836 and 0927322-6388.

'Magic Kitchen' premier

FANS of Jerry Yan will have the chance to be the first to see the star's much awaited solo movie. "Magic Kitchen" will have a premier night on Feb. 7 at 7:30 p.m. at Cinema 10 of SM Megamall.

The film also features Hongkong superstars Sammi Cheng, Maggie Q and Andu Lau.

More popularly-known as Dao Ming Si, the character he plays in the phenomenal "Meteor Garden" series, Jerry plays the role of an assistant cook in "Magic Kitchen." He is secretly in love with the beautiful chef and owner of the specialty restaurant where he works.

Undoubtedly the hottest heartthrob among F4 members, Jerry will have a lot romantic scenes with Sammi, who is rumored to be his real girlfriend, in "Magic Kitchen," which will be shown in several Metro Manila theaters starting Feb. 11.

'Lost' RP film found . . .

From page A24

from Manila was employed to direct the film, Eduardo de Castro. William H. Jansen, a local cameraman, shot the film made stunning by his remarkable underwater photography.

When the principal photography was done, Harris brought the negatives to Hollywood in April 1937 and commenced the film's post production. Louis R. Morse did the sound recording, Ralph Dixon did the editing and Dr. Edward Kilenyi was hired to do the musical scoring.

Exotic tale, native cast

Running for 65 minutes and shot in 35mm, the film is about a sea-faring tribe where a kindly and well-loved Datu Tanbuong rules. The tribe's main occupation is pearl fishing. Danao (played by Poe), a handsome young pearl fisher, is betrothed to Minda (played by del Rosario), the datu's granddaughter. Upon Danao's return with a handful of impressive pearls, the datu announces a celebration.

Among those invited is Hadji Razul, a cruel and lustful ruler of another tribe of piratical Moros living in another island. Engaged in piracy and looting, he has illicit relations with a renegade American Captain, owner of a small trading schooner, who delivers him smuggled Chinese coolies.

Danao and Hadji fight over Minda when Hadji abducts the maiden during one of Danao's diving expeditions. A tribal war ensues and peace was only restored when Danao rescues his woman and Hadji is killed. The ending shows the newly-married couple sailing into the sunset.

(Nick Deocampo is the author of Cine: Spanish Influences on Early Cinema in the Philippines, the first in five volumes covering the 100-year history of cinema in the Philippines.)

Araneta Center
ENTERTAINMENT GUIDE

ALI MALL CINEPLEX 7

Ali 1	SKY OF LOVE
Ali 2	LOTR: RETURN OF THE KING
Ali 3	MONA LISA SMILE
Ali 4	IN THE CUT
Ali 5	LAST SAMURAI
Ali 6	KILL BILL
Ali 7	THE TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE

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FEB 18	NCA 7-COCK DERBY
FEB 22	PBA FIESTA CUP OPENING
FEB 25	PBA GAMES

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THEATER MOVIE GUIDE

MANILA

EASTERN	
MAXIM	CLOSED
MIRAMAR	SEX BOMB / RAMPADORA
ODEON	X-MEN 2
ODEON-2	BUKID AY BASA / KASIBULAN
ROBEN	BOLD STAR
TANDEM-1	SUGAT
TANDEM-2	KATAWAN MO LANGIT KO
TIMES	SPY / LEGEND OF CROCODILE

QUEZON CITY

ACT-1	SENSUAL ISLAND
ACT-2	KAYA KO PERO MASAKIT
ACT-3	ORIGINAL SIN
ACT-4	HANGGANG KAILAN KA PAPATAY
CORONET A	BAKAT / DOUBLE SEDUCTION
CORONET B	A MAN APART
QUEZON-1	BERTUD NG PUTIK
REMAR	X-MEN 2
REMAR-2	BOLD STAR

NOVA MALL - NOVALICHES CINEMA

A	SEX SCANDAL
B	LORD OF THE RINGS
C	

MANDALUYONG CITY

SHANGRI-LA PLAZA MALL	635-20-79 / 633-78-51 TO 70
CINEMA-1	CLOSED FOR RENOVATION
CINEMA-2	CLOSED FOR RENOVATION

CAINTA RIZAL

STA. LUCIA EAST	(681-5401 TO 19)
CINEMA-1	KILL BILL
CINEMA-2	PURI
CINEMA-3	MALIKMATA
CINEMA-4 (DOLBY DIGITAL)	LAST SAMURAI
CINEMA-5 (DTS)	CAPTAIN BARBELL
CINEMA-6	MALIKMATA
CINEMA-7	MEMENTO MORI
CINEMA-8	TWINS EFFECT
CINEMA-9 (DTS)	LAST SAMURAI
CINEMA-10 (DOLBY DIGITAL)	BROTHER BEAR
CINEMA-11 (SDDS)	STUCK ON YOU
CINEMA-12	LOTR 3: RETURN OF THE KING
CINEMA-14	A TALE OF TWO SISTERS
CINEMA-15	DIABLO

LORES

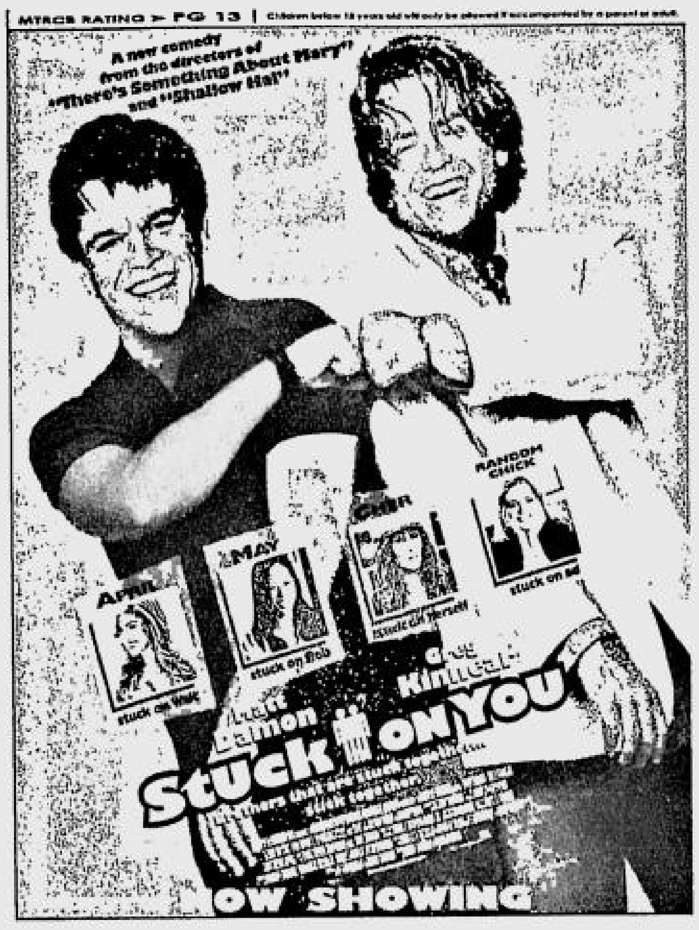
CINEMA-2	SENSUAL ISLAND
CINEMA-3	KAYA KO PERO MASAKIT

NE CINEMAGIC - CABANATUAN

(LAS PIÑAS)	LORD OF THE RINGS 3
CINEMA-1	KILL BILL
CINEMA-2	BANGKOK HAUNTED
CINEMA-4	CABIN FEVER

UNIWIDE COASTAL MALL

(PARAÑAQUE)	SENSUAL ISLAND
CINEMA-1	KAYA KO PERO MASAKIT
CINEMA-2	MEN IN BLACK II
CINEMA-4	SELDA



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DOLBY DIGITAL SURROUND-EX
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687-6963 • 687-6972
RESERVED SEATING
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1	TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE	12:20, 2:40, 5:00, 7:20, 9:45	PG-18
2	MONA LISA SMILE	11:40, 2:30, 5:20, 8:10, 10:50	PG-13
3	BROTHER BEAR	11:45, 1:45, 3:45 5:45, 7:45, 9:45	GP
4	THE LAST SAMURAI	12:20, 3:35, 6:50, 10:15	PG-13

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CINEMA 1 IN THE CUT 12:25, 3:10, 5:55, 8:40 R18
CINEMA 2 MONALISA SMILE 11:05, 1:50, 4:30, 7:10, 9:50 P13
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DIRECTED BY BRIAN YUZNA

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PRESENTS

G1 GLORIETTA 1	G4 GLORIETTA 4	GB1 GREENBELT 1	GB3 GREENBELT 3	ATC ALABANG TOWN CENTER
1 TEXAS CHAIN-SAW MASSACRE	1 STUCK ON YOU	ArtFilm 1 THE CALENDAR GIRLS 12:30, 2:45, 5:00, 7:15, 9:00	GUARANTEED SEATS THX 1 THE LAST SAMURAI 2:00 5:10 8:20 11:30	THX 1 MONA LISA SMILE
2 MONA LISA SMILE	2 TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE	2 MONA LISA SMILE 11:30 2:00 4:30 7:00 9:30	GUARANTEED SEATS THX 2 MONA LISA SMILE 1:30 4:00 6:30 9:00 11:30	2 BROTHER BEAR
3 IN THE CUT	GUARANTEED SEATS THX 3 THE LAST SAMURAI 1:00 4:10 7:20 10:30	Onstage REPERTORY'S FAME Feb. 7, 8, 14, 15, 21, 22, 28, 29, Mar. 6 & 7	GUARANTEED SEATS 3 SEABISCUIT 2:00 4:50 7:40 10:30	3 TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE
4 THE LAST SAMURAI	4 THE LORD OF THE RINGS 3		GUARANTEED SEATS 4 STUCK ON YOU 1:30 4:00 6:30 9:00 11:30	4 IN THE CUT
	5 BROTHER BEAR		GUARANTEED SEATS 5 TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE	5 THE LAST SAMURAI
	6 MONA LISA SMILE			
	7 IN THE CUT			

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2 LOTR; RETURN OF THE KING
3 (DTS) LAST SAMURAI
4 (DTS) STUCK ON YOU
5 TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE
6 MONA LIZA SMILE
7 BROTHER BEAR
8 DIABLO
9 KILL BILL
10 A TALE OF TWO SISTER

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2 (DOLBY) MONA LIZA SMILE
3 (DOLBY) BROTHER BEAR
4 (DOLBY) LAST SAMURAI

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1 KILL BILL
2 DAIBLO
3 LOLLIPOP

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2 MAPUSOK
3 DIABLO
LAST SAMURAI
4 (DOLBY DIGITAL EX) LOLLIPOP
5

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2 LOLLIPOP
3 DIABLO
4 IN THE CUT
5 LOTR: RETURN OF THE KING
6 LAST SAMURAI

M star
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(Las Pinas) tel 873.5004
1 LAST SAMURAI
2 MAPUSOK

PREMIERE CINEMA THX
(Makati City) tel 892.2503

Centre Plaza Cinema
(Balanga, Bataan) tel (047) 237.7007
1 LORD OF THE RING-3
2 SCARY MOVIE

Sunshine
(FTI, Taguig) tel 838.4301 loc. 3376
1 BENEATH LOCHNESS
2 NANANABIK
3
4

GOTESCO CINEMA

Gotesco City
(Manila) tel 734.8588
RESERVE
5
6
7 (DTS)
8 (SDDS)
9 (DOLBY)

Gotesco Grand Central
(Caloocan) tel 364.3781
1 PURI
2 A TALE OF TWO SISTER
3 TWIN EFFECTS
4 (SDDS) MONA LIZA SMILE
5 DIABLO
6 (DOLBY) TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE
7 (DTS) SHIRI
8 LAST SAMURAI
9 LOLLIPOP

Gotesco Commonwealth
tel 951.0083
1 RESERVE
2 (SDDS)
3 (DTS)
4 (DOLBY)
5

Gotesco Ortigas
tel 656.6795
1 DIABLO
2 WISHER
3 (DTS) LOTR: RETURN OF THE KING
4 LOLLIPOP
5 (SDDS) LAST SAMURAI

Universal
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1 RESERVE

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(Manila) tel 734.7724
Dilson INTERNET QUEEN
Lords BELYAS

MARRETHA
Mandaluyong tel 533.3851 / 533.3856
1 KILL BILL
2 DAYO
3 LOLLIPOP
4 RESERVE

Isetann Cinerama Complex Recto
SUPER CINERAMA
tel 733.4238
1 (DOLBY) TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE
2 MONA LIZA SMILE
3 DIABLO
4 SHIRI
5 IN THE CUT

Berma Cinema
(Baclaran) tel 879.2030 / 879.2029
1 UNDER WORLD
2 LOLLIPOP

THE CENTER OF ENTERTAINMENT
Araneta Center
ALI MALL CINEPLEX 7
1 SKY OF LOVE
2 LORD OF THE RINGS 3
3 (DOLBY DIGITAL) MONA LISA SMILE
4 (SDDS) IN THE CUT
5 (DTS) LAST SAMURAI
6 THE LAST SAMURAI
7 TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE

Jade Cinema
(Angeles City) tel (045) 887.5001 to 03
1 MONA LIZA SMILE
2 MEMENTO MORI
3 TWIN EFFECTS
4 THE GRUDGE

Cine Nepo
(Angeles City) tel (045) 887.0121
1 THE GRUDGE
2 MEMENTO MORI
3 (DOLBY) MONA LIZA SMILE
4 (DTS) KILL BILL

Cine Nepo
(Dagupan City) tel (075) 515.8489
1 GATHERING
2 INTERNET QUEEN
3 (DOLBY) SHADOW OF THE VAMPIRE
4 (DTS) LAST SAMURAI

CINEMA 2000

Cinema 2000 Target Mall
(Sta. Rosa, Laguna) tel (049) 837.0926
1 MONA LIZA SMILE
2 PURI
3 (DTS) TWIN EFFECTS

Cinema 2000 Waltermart
(Calamba) tel (049) 545.7383
1 DIABLO
2 (DTS) MONA LIZA SMILE
3 (DOLBY) LAST SAMURAI
4 TWIN EFFECTS

Cinema 2000 Pavilion Mall
(Biñan) tel (049) 411.1146
1 MONA LIZA SMILE
2 (DOLBY) TWIN EFFECTS
3 (DTS) LAST SAMURAI
4 DIABLO

Cinema 2000 Cinemagix
(Urdaneta) tel(075) 568.6771
1 SCARY MOVIE
2 THE GRUDGE
3 (DOLBY) KILL BILL

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(Tarlac) tel (045) 982.1729
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2 STUCK ON YOU
3 (DOLBY) TWIN EFFECTS
4 (DTS) NAKED WEAPON

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(Plaridel) tel (044) 795-3320
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2 KILL BILL
3 BUFALLO SOLDIER

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1 (SDDS) MEN
2 AMBISYOSA
3 LOLLIPOP
4 (DTS) ALIPIN

Lianas MovieCity
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1 (DOLBY) MONA LIZA SMILE
2 PURI
3 (DTS) LAST SAMURAI
4 LOLLIPOP
5 DIABLO

Olivarez Tri-Cinema
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1 WISHER
2 HIYAS

Olivarez Los Baños
tel (049) 249.2558
1 MONA LIZA SMILE
2 MASK
3 WISHER

Mega Center Mall
(Cabanatuan City) tel (044) 463.3283
1 SATURDAY SHOWING (ALIPIN)
2 PURI
3 (DTS) LOST ISLAND
4 (DOLBY) LAST SAMURAI

Cabuyao
(Laguna City) tel 520.8914
1 (DTS) RESERVE

Fiesta World Mall
(Lipa) tel (043) 981.0790
1 PURI
2 BRTHER BEAR
3 MEMENTO MORI
4 LAST SAMURAI

Emperor
(Rosario Cavite) tel (046) 438.1657
1 LORD OF THE RING
2 KISKISAN

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IN THE CUT R18 1:30, 4:10, 6:50, 9:30	SHIRI R13 12:00, 2:30, 5:00, 7:30, 10:00	MONA LISA SMILE R13 12:20, 2:50, 5:20, 7:50, 10:20

MATINEE P80.00 - FREE SEATING - SCREENINGS BEFORE 5 PM - MON. TO FRI.

Return of the songbird and songwriter

THE PUBLIC'S clamor for more has prompted the return of "The Songbird and the Songwriter... Journey of Love... Music to Remember" at the Araneta Coliseum on Feb. 13 and 15.

The Expo Filipino concert originally scheduled on Feb. 14 will not push through to give way to the coupling of Regine Velasquez and Ogie Alcacid in a bigger and more accessible venue.

Touted as the biggest local Valentine event of the year, this is also the first time that Regine and Ogie will be performing back-to-back.

Joining them are "Star for A Night" champion Sarah Geronimo, "Star in a Million" winner Erik Santos, the Hotlegs and the Sex Bomb.

Included in the repertoire are "Urong-Sulong," "Dito sa Puso Ko," "Dadalhin," "Sa Piling Mo," "Nandito Ako," "Ako'y Iyungiyo," "All My Life," "Bongga Ka, 'Day," "Huwag Ka Lang Mawawala," "Kailangan Ko'y Ikaw," "Pangarap Kong Ibigin Ka," "Pangako," "Hanggang Ngayon," and many more hits.

"The Songbird and the Songwriter... Journey of Love... Music to Remember" is produced by Viva Concerts and line-produced by Aria Productions. Musical director is Raul Mitra. TV director is Louie Ignacio. Stage direction is by Regine Velasquez and Ogie Alcasid.

Tickets to the concerts are priced at P200, P500, P750, P1,500, P2,000 and P2,500, and are available at all SM Ticketnet outlets and at the Araneta Ticketnet (911-5555). For inquiries, you may call Viva Concerts at 687-5853 or 687-1125.

The concert is presented by Wyeth Pro-Gifted Formulas and GMA. Co-presentors are Nestlé Ice Cream, Puma Eyewear, Leonardo Bags, Pepsi, MYX, People's Tonight and the Philippine Star. Radio partners are Yes-FM 101.1, I-FM 93.9, Love Radio 90.7, WRock 96.3 and WRR 101.9.

For love and stardom

From page A23

cue, said that everything he had worked hard for he left to Aiko. She wanted an annulment. He granted that too. Perhaps he did gave her everything except his fidelity.

Rules of love

As a Valentine teaser, I cornered some celebrities and asked them what's the most romantic thing they did for somebody they love and what are their rules on love.

LUIS MANZANO: For me every day is a romantic one. I try to do something romantic no matter how simple it might be to show my girl how much she means to me. I don't think love should have rules! Just be yourself. Love your partner with all your heart and be ready for one hell of a ride!

GELLI DE BELEN: I asked the help of my friends to arrange a surprise for (Ariel Rivera, her husband). We found a spot somewhere in UP and set it up with a table, two chairs, candles all over the grass, balloons, etc. When Ariel and I got there after dinner, my friends directed us to our table amidtall trees. There were roses everywhere. A card I made for Ariel was read aloud by a friend. Then four members of the UP Madrigal sang a few songs while we danced under the stars!

My rules are simple: Respect one another. Love yourself, but be willing to compromise!

ALBERT MARTINEZ: I must say that turning my back on my movie career to pursue the love of my life, Liezl, in the US against all odds is the most romantic thing I've ever done! I can sum up my rules for love in three words: love, respect and understanding. Love is the one that binds. Respect makes it precious, and understanding keeps you together.

MARVIN AGUSTIN: In the romance department, nothing can beat my following a girl who I just met in her country even if I haven't been there before and did not know anybody there! My rules for love are these: Never plan it! Just be spontaneous, yet sincere!

Traveling exhibit

Alliance Francaise de Manille, in cooperation with the Canadian Embassy, Japan Foundation, Big Sky Mind and keep your distance, presents "I Miss You 2003-2006," a traveling exhibit.

Exhibiting artists are Sylvie Belange (Canada), Michael Campbell (USA), Yoshinori Hosoki (Japan), Kan Xuan (China), Philippe Laleu and Christine Monceau (France).

Opening on Feb. 9 at Alliance Total Gallery at 209 Nicanor Garcia St., Bel Air 11, Makati, the exhibit will travel throughout Asia, Europe and North America.

For more details, call 8957585, or log on to www.alliance.ph.

Vive l'art!!

For feedback, e-mail friends_elpueblo@yahoo.com or dollyanne@truefaithband.com

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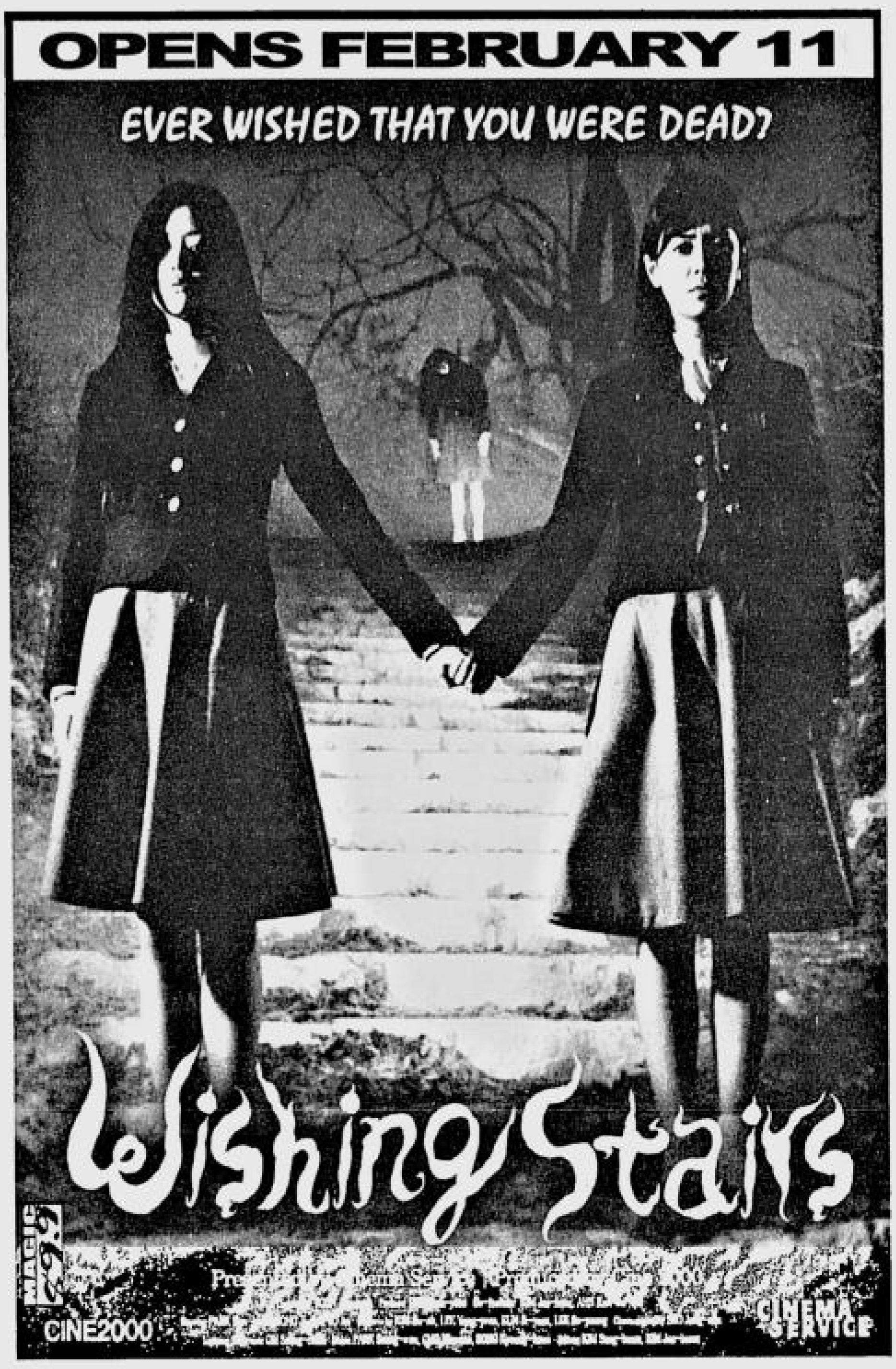
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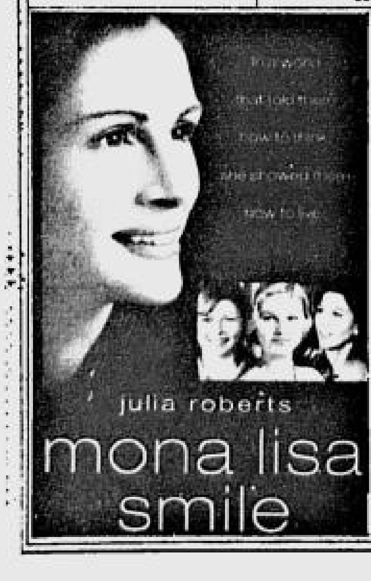
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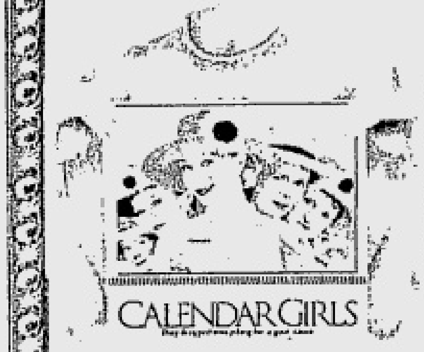
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NOKIA INQUIRER

Filmmaking as the art of the possible

By Gibbs Cadiz

"IF you want to be a writer for movies, but you feel that not one word of your script should be changed, or that, you know, you're writing the Gospels, then I greatly suggest you become a novelist instead."

That trenchant statement of Tinseltown *realpolitik*—part advice and part admonition—was one of many revelatory zingers that Joey Javier Reyes had lobbed to an appreciative audience of about 300 students, industry practitioners, film enthusiasts and the plain curious who attended the opening of "Take 6: Film Directors Lecture Series" at the UP Film Center on Jan. 14.

Many of them had come to learn from the much-lauded writer-director how to get their nascent scripts and stories recognized and made into movies. They got that, and much more.

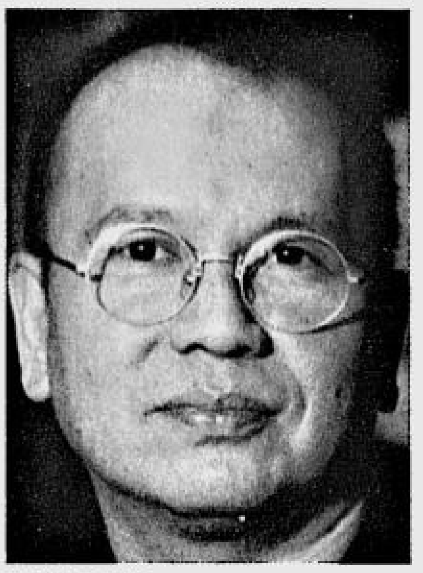
For nearly four hours, Reyes talked in nimble, often picturesque English on the relationship between the film director and the screenwriter. In the end, he managed to puncture not a few illusions held by the audience about the importance of the script in the overall cinematic scheme.

"The screenplay is not the film but only a blueprint of what will eventually become a film," he said. Thus, "the script should never be mistaken as the film itself. It is merely the recipe, the means but not the end product in the process of filmmaking."

Director's medium

Defining film as a director's medium, and more importantly, as a commercial product, is necessary if scriptwriters are to get out of the mindset that their work is all in the service of high art.

"Let's be honest," Reyes said. "Moviemaking is a business, and you have to find a balance between your vision as a director and the demands of your producer to make money."



JAVIER REYES

LAMANGAN

If you really believe that your script is so good that it should never be rewritten to suit market considerations, you should produce the film yourself, according to Reyes. Otherwise, the producer's words carry ultimate clout, he added.

"The director still has the final say in the manner by which a script will eventually achieve its draft form, inasmuch as the producer still has the right to approve or disapprove what the director wants," Reyes explained.

Endless, constant revisions

That might sound like a sorry position for a writer to be in, but there's more. He has to submit a first draft, do innumerable revisions based on the inputs of the director and producer (in a sequence treatment for a story on young love, for instance, how many are the *"kilig"* moments? Or, as Reyes cheekily put it, *"Saan at ilang beses ba sila magtutusukan ng* cotton candy? *O magtutulakan sa* Ferris wheel?"), write a final draft and shooting script—and still not get a break.

That's because "the process of translating a screenplay into a film product requires endless and constant revisions and reassessments," explained Reyes.

An actor might not be comfortable with a particular line, for example, so the writer has to change it. Or the director thinks an entire sequence would be better off without dialogue.

Asked why he has opted to be both writer and director in most of his movies, Reyes explained that it was partly because of his exasperation with "writers who wait for *'inspirasyon'* before they can write," causing costly production delays. *"Diyos ko, nabuntis at nanganak na ang* young star, *wala pa ang* script!"

Just write

Reyes, who is known not only for his prolific work but also for the speed with which he does them (he wrote the acclaimed script for "Batang PX" in two days, his fastest record), had forceful words to say about the process of writing itself.

"You know what your creative writing classes teach you about structure? *Leche*! It's all bulls--t. Just write," he said.

And always join scriptwriting contests, because that's how the likes of Senedy Que ("Mga Munting Tinig," "Homecoming") and Mark Meilly ("Crying Ladies") got noticed.

Of course, try to be better than our generation of writers, was Reyes' final rejoinder.

Gimmick

A week later, director Joel Lamangan delivered a lecture on "Directing and Acting for Film, and he came with his own "gimmick." Lamangan brought along actors Eric Quizon, Allan Paule and Cherry Pie Picache to help him in his presentation.

He showed his mastery of both directing and acting by making his three wards act out the points he wanted to illustrate. For example, to show the various kinds of actors that a director has to manage on the set, Quizon, Paule and Picache alternately played the *"artistang sipsip," "walang alam," "naglalagare sa* soap opera" (and forgetful of her lines), *"artistang gustong i-*direct *ang sarili," "magka-away," "me problema sa buhay,"* etc.—all of them with hilarious commentary, in pungent, pithy Filipino, from the famously acid-tongued director.

Marvelous visual device

Talking about the various forms of internalization that actors employ and that a hapless director has to consider to get a scene right, the three performers acted out the *"artistang kailangang may* music *sa* background," or *"kailangang walang ilaw," "ayaw na may ibang artista sa* set," *"ihi ng ihi* before the take," *"nag-e-*exercise," *nasusuka"* and so on.

The vignettes were a marvelous visual device (and a showcase of Picache's dazzling skills in impromptu acting) in underlining Lamangan's main point: What is important in film acting is for actors to come up with a performance that is "sincere, authentic, *nararamdaman*."

"Malaki ang pagkakaiba ng acting and performing," Lamangan, a veteran stage thespian, said. *"Merong pagganap na nararamdaman, at meron ding palabas lang."*

It is the director's role, he stressed, to make sure that the actor is "acting, not performing." To this end, Lamangan is loathe to impose a particular interpretive method on an actor.

And, while some directors can be tyrants on the set, one just has to be fair and resolute, according to Lamangan. No one is ever late on his set because the director lays down the ground rules on punctuality, among other things, on the first shooting day.

"Minsan, meron akong artistang nakatira sa Manila *na na-*late *sa* shooting," he recalled. *"Nung tinanong ko, sabi sa akin,* 'sorry direk, *nawala ako'. Aba e,* ang location *namin sa* Café Adriatico. *Sabi ko, 'P---ina, suntukan na lang tayo, niloloko mo ako!' Ngayon, di na siya nali-*late."

Orchestra conductor

That about sums up the extent of the director's role in the moviemaking process: Not only is he tasked to come up with a workable vision for the film, he also becomes a mother hen, referee, drill sergeant, confidante, psychologist (*"Tutulungan mo ang artista na humanap ng kaparehong emosyon sa kanyang karanasan para hindi* abstract *ito"*), and the oft-quoted "orchestra conductor" all rolled into one.

Like Reyes, Lamangan takes a decidedly clear-eyed view about working within an admittedly difficult system. *"Kailangan alam mo kung paano kakausapin ang* producer, *ang artista, ang* writer, *ang* crew, *para makuha mo ang gusto mo,"* he said.

These two directors' distinguished stature in mainstream Philippine cinema today is proof that filmmaking, as a supremely collaborative medium, is all about the art of working for the possible.

E-mail the author at gcadiz@inquirer.com.ph

From total unknown to TV character actress

VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre

IN ABS-CBN's new "reality TV" show, "To the Max" (weekdays after "Magandang Tanghali, Bayan"), hundreds of applicants vie for a plum job or assignment. Last Monday, over 500 young women applied to be chosen as one of 15 finalists competing to play a *yaya* character on a TV series.

The 15 finalists were presumably all amateurs in the field of acting, so they were initially chosen mainly for type, character, temperament and appropriateness to the *yaya* role.

Then the 15 were given "screen tests" to determine their performing skills. The five least likely were dismissed, then the remaining 10 were given an acting test that required them to share a scene with **Maritoni Fernandez**, who played their heartless employer in the show.

Some finalists got rattled when Fernandez slapped them and threw a glass of water into their shocked faces, but others managed to hold their own.

The best five were retained, to be subjected to further tests of talent and determination in the coming days.

Fernandez was given 50 percent of the score to dispense among the finalists as she pleased. So, the five "surviving" finalists must have measured up in some ways to her thespic standards.

However, excerpts from Fernandez's scenes with the 10 finalists showed her performing in a much too broadly and fiercely *kontrabida* manner, acting up a storm, shrieking at full volume, flailing her arms about—etc.

We hoped that the 10 finalists didn't think that this was supposed to be what good acting was about, because it was clearly too over-the-top to be taken seriously.

Other observations: Some of the 15 chosen finalists were too raw to do well even as first-time thespians. The show would have done better if it had first given them a brief acting workshop, so that the task of performing would be made clearer to them, before subjecting them to the on-cam "screen test" that became part of the contest proper.

But we liked the relatively kind way that the show handled the awkward task of sequentially dismissing some of the finalists. It was much less cruel than the on-cam rejection on "Star-struck."

In "To the Max," the losers were turned down gently, so much less psychic harm was done to them and their sense of self-worth.

Finally, we liked the way that the show was handled by its main host, **Marvin Agustin.**

Since he himself comes from humble beginnings, Marvin knows how difficult it is for unprepared people to find a good job, especially in the harum-scarum world of show business.

So, he did his best to keep the finalists well-motivated and focused, and they clearly appreciated his concern.

Let's hope that, when "To the Max" finally chooses its winner this week, she will play her *yaya* role well, and it will lead to a good career for her as a character actress on television.

That way, the show's promise of success for complete unknowns (after subjecting them to so many rigorous and exhausting tests) shall have borne genuinely inspiring fruit.

Tonet at Captain's Bar

MANDARIN Oriental Manila's Captain's Bar has always been a popular venue for intimate shows, but it's become even more choice, with **Tonet Salcedo** performing on Monday nights.

Tonet drew habitues to Weinstube in Malate in the '80s with her sultry voice and exotic appeal. Later, she opted to design interiors and running her own restaurant, Endangered Species. Now, she's back to what she loves most, singing well-loved, timeless songs.

Tonet makes her Captain's Bar debut at 9 p.m. on Feb. 9, with **Romy Posadas** on piano, **Roger Herrera** on bass, and **Ramon Guevarra** on percussion.

'Survivor: All Stars'

STUDIO 23 presents "Survivor: All Stars" this February. Eighteen of the show's past "Castaways," including four previous million-dollar winners, are competing for 39 days "somewhere in Panama" to determine, once and for all, who will be the reality series' Sole Survivor.

Episodes will be aired live via satellite every Friday at 2 p.m., beginning Feb. 6.

"Survivor's" prime time telecast airs on Sundays, starting with a two-hour premiere on Feb. 8, from 7 to 9 p.m. Subsequent hour-long episodes air at 7 p.m. beginning Feb. 15.

CLAUDINE and Paolo: Lovers in 'Milan.'

'Milan': A labor of love

MILAN is not the name of the character that Claudine Barreto plays in director Olive Lamasans "Milan." It is a beautiful and romantic Italian city where the film, which showcases the first screen coupling of Claudine and Piolo Pascual, was shot.

The director also describes this latest film from Star Cinema as a love story and a "true labor of love." While on location in Italy for almost a month, everybody acted on equal footing, she said. The production's limited budget required everybody, including the stars, to help set up props and do other small task when they are not in the scene, Lamasan added.

"That's why "Milan" is more than a love story, but "a true labor of love," Lamasan said.

The movie tells the tale of a young Filipino man played by Piolo, who goes to Italy to look for his long-missing Overseas Foreign Worker wife. Instead of finding his wife, the man finds love in the character played by Claudine, a prominent OFW in the Filipino community in that part of the world.

Opening in Metro Manila on Feb. 11, "Milan" will have a premier night on Feb. 10 at SM Megamall, and premier showings on Feb. 13 in San Francisco, California; Feb. 19 in Abu Dhabi; Feb. 21 in Dubai; and Feb. 22 in Milan.

For love and stardom

DOLLY WOOD

Dolly Ann Carvajal

AT THE heels of "Starstruck" is another talent search, this time tapping children.

I can already imagine the hordes of stage mothers primping their children for "Starstruck Kids," which will also air on GMA 7.

But will the children be ready for gruelling training sessions contestants have to undergo? Will they be willing to set aside their studies for a chance at stardom? Let's hope that the kids won't be subjected to public humiliation when they are eliminated from the contest.

Although rejection is something we all have to deal with at some point in our lives, it's aggravated when it happens to someone in front of a million viewers. This could be traumatic for the kids. Hopefully, the "Starstruck" contestants wouldn't be "damaged" if they don't make it to the magic circle.

Ms D's DAY!

Dina Bonnevie has just turned another year, and she's even lovelier inspite of it.

This woman never seems to age, though she claims that she can already feel the bulges creeping in her body hardened by work at the gym.

"As I grow older, I find myself looking at the mirror wondering how to stay in shape. No matter how much you diet and exercise, age catches up with you somehow!" says Ms D.

I'm sure her legions of admirers will disagree. She doesn't look like the mother of two teenage children. I have known Ms D since her "Katorse" days, and she doesn't look a day older.

Perhaps her spunk and attitude keep her looking youthful. Ms D looks at life straight in the eye, and she's ready to face anything as long as she has psyched herself up for the part.

Mother Nature has endowed her with everything other women can only dream of. But if there's one thing Ms D still longs for, it's finding Mr. Right.

"I hope God will finally give me the right guy this year, but if he does not come my way I will still get by. I have never been one who would sit and just let life pass me by."

No more bitterness

Aiko Melendez harbors no more bitterness toward her ex, **Jomari Yllana.** But she's wishing he could find more time to spend with their son, **Andrei.**

"Between Jom and me, I think I'm the one who's busier so I don't see why he keeps saying he's too busy for Andrei," says the actress. *"Anak niya ito so dapat lang bigyan niya ng oras.* That's all I'm asking.

"When Jom is down, I'm there for him. When he's happy I am also happy for him. So *sana naman*, when I tell him our son needs to bond with him, he should find a way to do so. Aside from that he can do whatever he pleases."

Aiko has found love anew in the arms of **Victor Neri.**

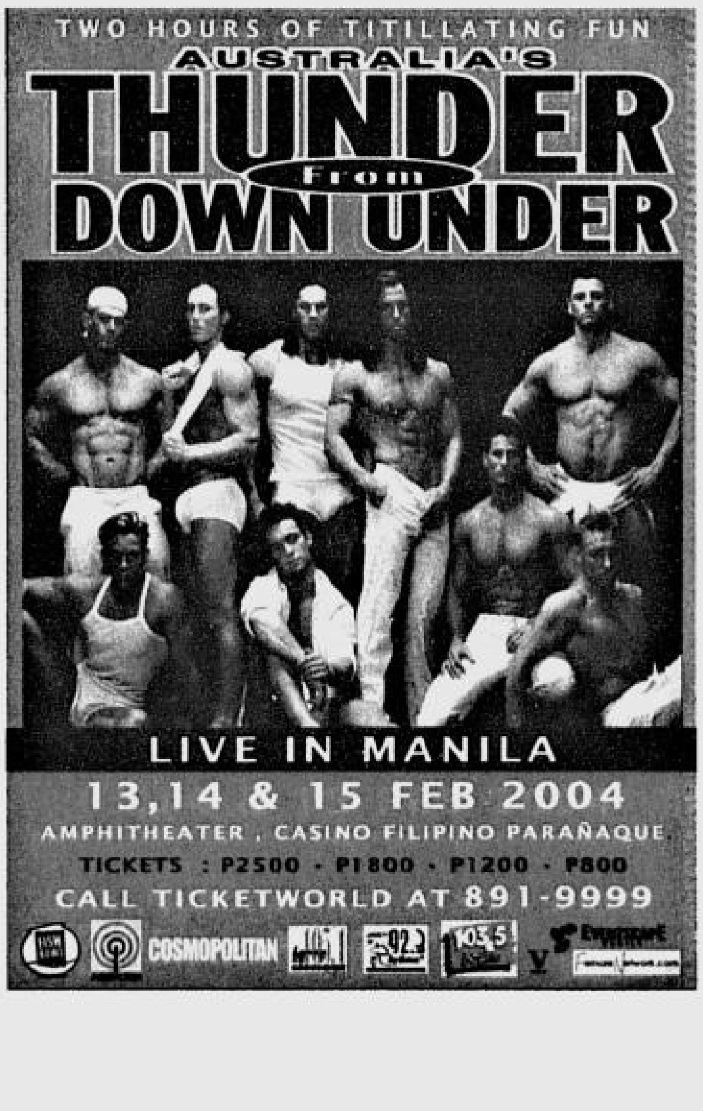
"I'm too happy with Victor to be bothered by talks about Jom and whoever," she says. "But it's too early to tell where my relationship with Victor will lead. I just got my annulment so I don't think I'm ready for something as serious as another marriage. What's important is that we are both happy, and Victor makes an effort to be close to Andrei. That makes me love him more."

Aiko and I have had many heart-to-heart talks, and I must say that love owes her a better deal because she always gives her all.

I caught the latter part of Jomari Yllana's dramatic one-on-one interview with **Richard Gomez** on "S-Files." He was begging Aiko to stop putting him down. Didn't he stop to think for a moment that Aiko was just being honest? Hasn't it crossed his mind that he might have brought on this onslaught on himself? Was he out to get the sympathy of the audience?

He claimed that there's nothing Aiko had asked for that he didn't give. Jom, with tears on

FOR LOVE/A22



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Lost found 1936 RP film in US archive

By Nick Deocampo
Contributor

(Editor's note: This article is included in Nick Deocampo's new book Film: US Colonization and the Emergence of Cinema in the Philippines, to be released in September 2004 to commemorate the 85th Anniversary of Philippine Cinema.)

A COPY of the film "Zamboanga," a movie about the exotic life of south sea dwellers daringly shot in the remote island of Jolo in 1936 was found recently in the US.

With the recent discovery of the film print, plans are underway to repatriate the film back to the Philippines.

This February, it will be the festival opening film at the "Pelikula at Lipunan" to celebrate the Philippine movie industry's forthcoming 85th anniversary.

"Zamboanga" was made 60 years ago by two American producers, Eddie Tait and George Harris. It is the first attempt to launch a Philippine-made film for international release.

Hoping that the success of the film would turn the Philippines into the Hollywood of the Orient, they produced, aimed for the American market.

But after its premiere in San Diego, California and its screening in New York on Dec. 10, 1937, nothing has been heard of it.

The film has for decades been considered a lost film, one of the hundreds made before World War II that is irretrievably lost. Until a copy was recently found.

During my last research trip as a senior Fulbright research scholar in the Library of Congress in Washington D.C., I was surprised to be informed by a library staff, Zoran Sinobad, that there was a newly-acquired film about the Philippines, and would I be interested to take a look at it? I was lukewarm at the invitation because after years of rummaging through hundreds of film titles in the library's collection, there must have been at least three films I came across with the name Zamboanga in them. None was the fabled Tait and Harris film. What could possibly make me think that this newly found film was the lost classic?

I only became interested when I was told that the film was newly-struck from an original print that came all the way from Finland. Now there's a story. Why would a film about the Philippines turn up in a frigid country in the Scandinavian peninsula? Interesting!

My anxiety grew intense as I waited for the print to arrive while my departure date was nearing. But three days before I left, the print finally arrived. To my biggest shock, the film I hoped to find was right before my very eyes! After perhaps 60 years that the film has not been seen by any Filipino, there I was watching the film alone in the darkened viewing room of the archive. It was a thrill of a lifetime!

I sat spellbound for 65 minutes watching the young Fernando Poe display his masculine physique and the beauteous Rosa del Rosario glow in the well-photographed black-and-white film. Patterned in the genre of the south sea film made famous by Robert Flaherty's "Moana," the film capitalized on tales of exoticism. It showed the picturesque sea and the captivating landscape and with warring tribes and a kidnapped maiden to hook the audience's attention.

Mother of all RP films

The discovery of "Zamboanga" brings only to four the feature-length films made in the Philippines that survived the catastrophic war. A few hundred others failed to make it. Its rarity gives the film its aura of significance. The film joins the distinguished line-up of pre-war films "Tunay na Ina" (1938), "Pakiusap" (1938) and "Giliw Ko" (1938). But none beats "Zamboanga's" production date of 1936. It is truly the mother of all studio-made films in the country!

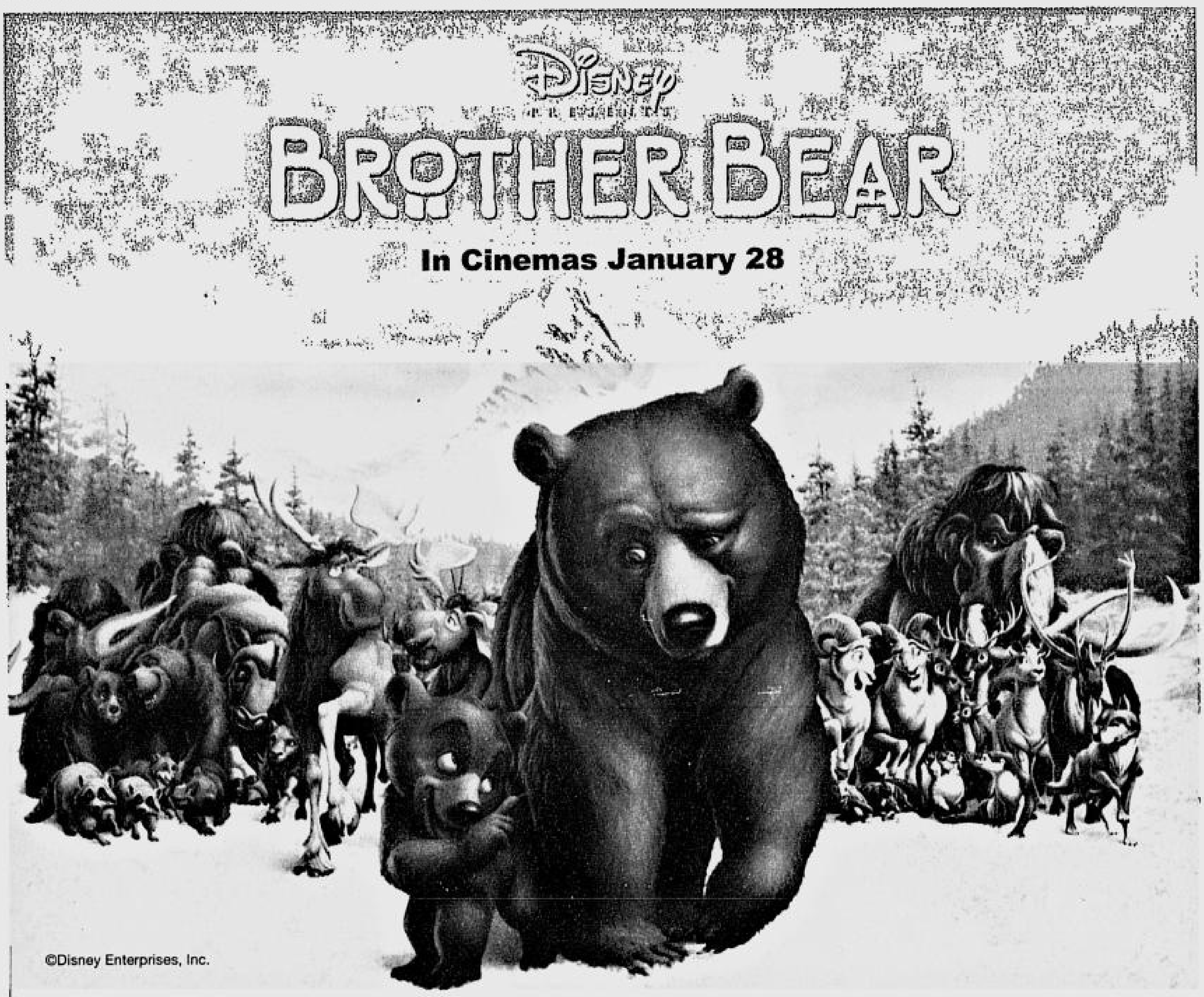
Historically, "Zamboanga" came at a crucial moment in the history of filmmaking in the Philippines. Tait and Harris revolutionized local filmmaking when they established the first film studio, Filippine Films, in 1932. Their act ushered in the studio system that made it possible for subsequent native-owned studios like the LVN, Sampaguita, Premiere and Lebran to bring Philippine movies to their "golden era" in the '50s.

Starting their career first as circus showmen, the two Americans later embarked on film production with the high hope of one day turning the Philippines into becoming Asia's enviable film capital. Upon teaming up with George Harris, the former producer of Hollywood's celebrated director, Frank Capra, Eddie Tait introduced technical innovations that upgraded the fledgling native film industry. The two brought with them not only up-to-date technology and expertise but also capital and the necessary clout to produce quality films.

Underwater photography

To make "Zamboanga," the two Americans engaged themselves in nine months of film production in Jolo, the second largest island in the Sulu Sea. An American mestizo

LOST/ A21



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Poultry raisers feel pinch of bird flu scare

By Christine A. Gaylican

LOCAL poultry raisers are beginning to feel the pinch of the bird flu scare as sales have slowed down by 15 percent in the last two weeks.

Industry players led by backyard growers and large broiler producers yesterday confirmed that the public had slashed consumption of chicken products following reports on the spread of the Avian virus in some Asian countries.

"Prices of live chicken have fallen by 29 percent to P40 per kilo this week from P68 per kilo," according to Gregorio San Diego, president of the backyard growers association.

He noted that they were now selling at a loss since production costs were at P60 per kilo because of the prevailing high feed prices.

The small backyard raisers supply the requirements of wet markets and holds 30 percent of the entire national production.

The poultry stocks of the country's large agribusiness firms such as San Miguel Foods, Swiftfoods, Tyson Agro-Ventures, Universal Robina and Vitarich Corp., are also starting to build up—an indication that demand has been low.

Fast-food operator Kenny Rogers Roasters general manager Neil Streeter said in the same press briefing yesterday that their sales have been down by 3 percent.

Live chicken accounted for less than 20 percent of the total sales of the country's P74-billion poultry industry in 2003. Poultry accounted for 14.4 percent of the 30-percent share taken up by agriculture in the country's gross domestic product.

Alarmed by falling chicken sales, Trade and Industry Secretary Cesar Purisima and Agriculture Secretary Luis P. Lorenzo Jr. held a joint press conference to assure the public that chicken products in the country were safe to eat.

Purisima, who also heads the National Price Monitoring Board, said retail prices of pork products—a known protein substitute for chicken—have risen by P10 to P130 per kilo.

The bird flu scare has prompted the slaughter of millions of chicken in South Korea, Vietnam and Japan and has caused the deaths of 13 people in Vietnam.

Japan has stepped up its efforts to isolate its first outbreak of the disease in nearly 80 years.

Officials from the World Health Organization (WHO) said avian flu is a big concern especially if the virus develops the ability to spread through human contact since humans have practically no defenses against the disease.

The WHO has stressed there is no evidence so far to show the virus can spread from person to person.

Insurance industry consolidation seen

By Doris C. Dumlao

WITH a population of about 80 million which swells by over 2 percent each year, the Philippines appears to be a very lucrative market for life insurance companies.

B-One

With this picture in mind, 20 foreign insurance companies flocked to the country when the government, in 1992, tore down the barriers to entry of foreign players into the local market.

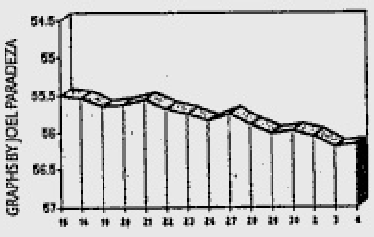
Prior to the industry's liberalization, there were only three foreign players—Philippine American Life, Sun Life of

INSURANCE/ B4

VICENTE Aylion
EDWIN BACASMAS

INDICATORS

CURRENCIES



PESO-DOLLAR RATE

P 56.16 = $ 1
As of 5 p.m., Feb. 4, 2004

¥ 105.42 = $ 1
As of 5 p.m., Feb. 4, 2004

GOLD: $400.80-401.30
per ounce Hong Kong, Feb. 3, 2004

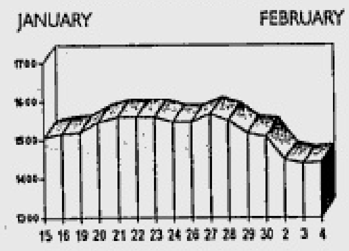
INTEREST RATES

February 04, 2004-MART1 Rates Benchmark Interest Rates	MART1 4-Feb-04	MART1 3-Feb-04
1 Month	6.4932	6.4654
3 Months	6.4965	6.4607
6 Months	7.7483	7.7321
1 Year	8.6982	8.6446
2 Years	9.46	9.4589
3 Years	10.3042	10.3223
4 Years	10.72	10.7161
5 Years	11.085	11.0643
7 Years	11.4117	11.4054
10 Years	11.6533	11.6464
20 Years	12.0783	11.9911
25 Years	12.3833	12.3054

SOURCE: MART/BLOOMBERG

STOCK MARKET

PSE COMPOSITE INDEX



(See stock market report on Page B2)

Shares up on technical bounce

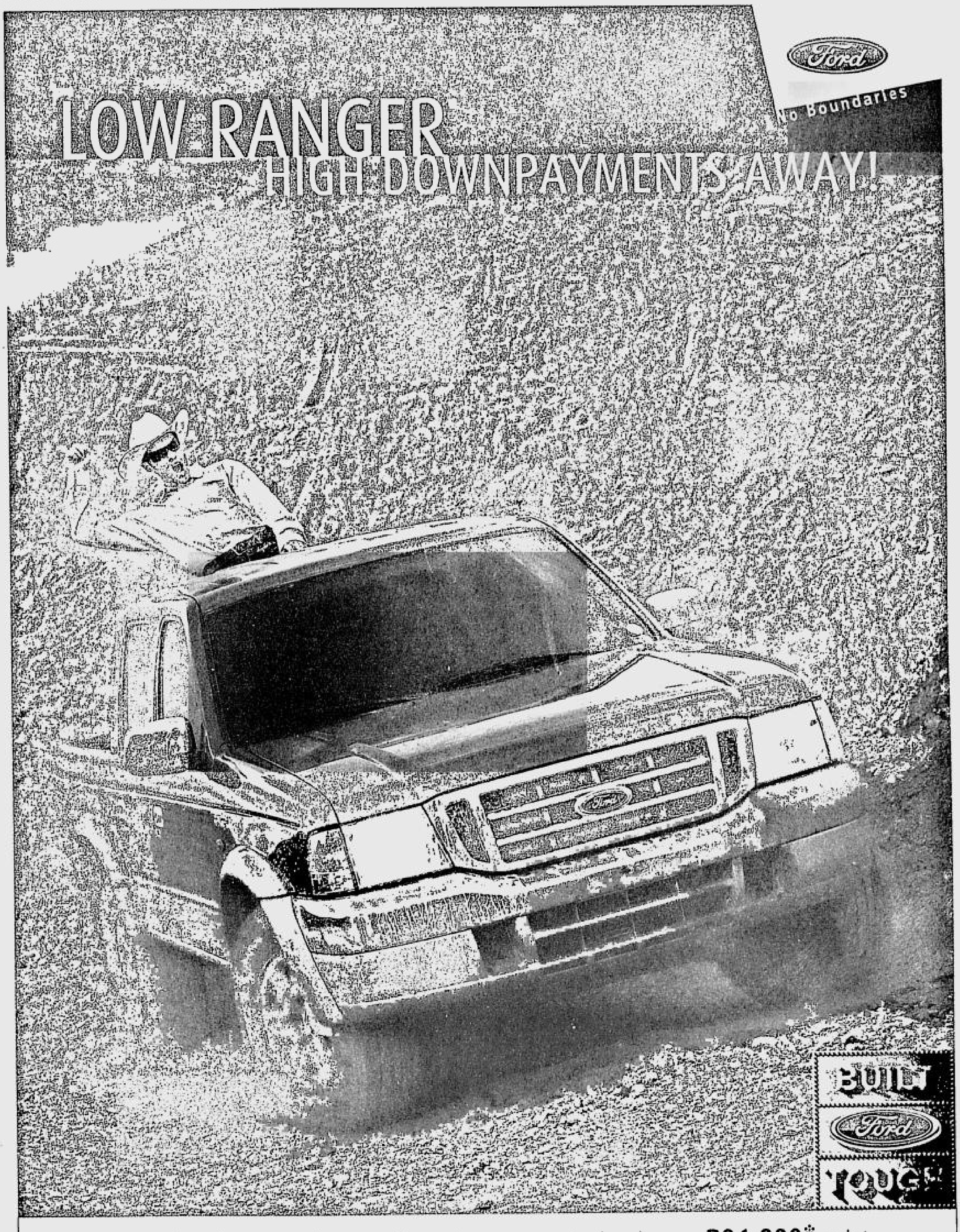
THE MAIN stock index closed marginally higher in a mixed session yesterday on a mild technical recovery following five sessions of losses, traders said.

The 30-company Philippine Stock Exchange Index ended up 3.45 points, or 0.2 percent, at 1,441.12. On Tuesday, the index dropped 0.6 percent, bringing its total loss to 8.1 percent since Jan. 28.

Boosting the main index was blue-chip Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. (PLDT), which was the most actively traded stock, up P15 or 1.8 percent, at P840—in step with the one-percent gain by the company's American Depositary Receipts in New York Tuesday.

The broader market was still relatively weak, with decliners leading advancers 33 to 17, while 40 issues were unchanged, as foreign selling continued on a number of stocks, such as Manila Electric "B", which fell P3, or 9.5 percent, to P28.50.

Second-line stock Pilipino Telephone, or Piltel, also suffered from a heavy sell-off, ending down 28 centavos, or 19 percent, at P1.18 on profit taking. The stock had earlier benefited from speculation that it will merge with mobile phone firm Smart Communications. **AP**



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BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Broker gets mandate to sell PSE shares at ₱119.50 each

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE PHILIPPINE Stock Exchange has mandated local investment house ATR-Kim Eng Capital Partners Inc. to sell new PSE shares through a private placement at P119.50 each before the May elections.

The mandate came despite the resistance among some brokers, who still own about 99 percent of the exchange, to the PSE's move to offer shares at a steep discount. PSE shares were last traded at P195 on Jan. 27.

In a letter to stockholders dated Feb. 2, PSE president Cayetano Paderanga Jr. said the PSE could generate as much as P733 million in cash from the private placement, which can then be used to develop its infrastructure.

He said proceeds from the sale would likewise improve the PSE's return on equity.

"Despite the deteriorating stock market conditions, the underwriter tapped to assist your exchange has reported that it has generated enough demand for the shares of the exchange. Such was its confidence that it has committed to underwrite on a firm basis of up to 20 percent of the issued capital and another 20 percent on a best-effort basis," Paderanga said.

In its last board meeting, the PSE approved the offering of shares through a private placement at P119.50 each.

"The proposed private placement was studied carefully and it was the considered view that it will not only partially achieve our goal of effective demutualization, but also enhance the value of our shares," Paderanga told the stockholders.

Citing the Securities and Exchange Commission's constant reminder that the PSE must comply with the legal requirement to diffuse the controlling interest of stockbrokers, Paderanga said the exchange was given two option—to either offer to institutional groups a percentage of unissued shares at a reasonable price or make a public offering of the shares.

"Your board, after seeking counsel, decided to adopt the first option as being the alternative that would secure the highest value for the shares since a public offering in this market will not be feasible," he said.

As the country's premier exchange, Paderanga said it must set the example for corporate citizenship in upholding the provisions of the Securities Regulation Code.

A source from underwriter ATR-Kim Eng Capital yesterday told the INQUIRER the private placement could be closed before the May presidential elections.

"Even under a good time this is already a good deal. Look at the environment when we're doing this," the source said, citing the sharp drop in the stock market and the free fall of the peso against the US dollar.

"The investors coming in are all high-quality Philippine institutions and they will add a lot of value to the governance of the PSE," the source said.

The source said the stockholders would benefit from the deal as the shares would be issued at a premium to book value and that dividend payout would be enhanced.

Former PSE director and corporate secretary Francisco Villaroman of Securities Specialist recently wrote to the PSE board questioning the offering.

"The magic words we heard about the rush to listing the shares were price discovery and shareholder value. In other words, allow the market to determine the share market value and this would benefit the stockholders," Villaroman said.

"Fine, now the market has spoken. The market for the shares is near P200 to P250. Why the exchange now is making this late move to tender at a price 40 percent below market, thereby depriving its own shareholders of the benefit of the market's valuation, is simply impenetrable," he claimed.

PNB Capital posts 94% jump in 2003 net profit

PNB Capital and Investment Corp., the investment house subsidiary of Philippine National Bank, reported a 94-percent jump in net profit to P45.5 million in 2003 from a year ago.

Citing the period as a banner year for PNB Capital, parent PNB yesterday said in a statement that the net income in 2003 exceeded the P37.2-million target for the period.

PNB Capital, which started operations seven years ago, is a wholly owned PNB subsidiary providing investment banking services such as underwriting of equity and debt issues, project finance, bond floats, asset securitization, debt paper-related transactions and financial advisory.

PNB Capital chair Florencia Tarriela attributed the company's sharp gains to the "net increase in the value of trading account securities and higher interest income derived from its other investments."

Despite the difficult economic environment, she said PNB Capital managed to grow through the prudent management of its assets and keeping expenses in check.

The company's earnings were likewise boosted by increased lending operations toward the end of 2003.

For 2004, PNB Capital officer-in-charge Emmanuel Lopez-Dee said the investment house was targeting a conservative net income of P36.4 million or lower than last year's bottomline "to make room for difficult market conditions that may be brought by the national election in May."

Bulk of PNB Capital's investment banking activities were derived from the underwriting of municipal bonds. As such, the company admitted that any sign of political instability posed a threat to its profitability.

Still, PNB Capital said it aimed to close within the year a total of P1 billion in municipal bonds underwriting. PNB Capital ranked 10th out of the 36 operating investment houses in the country in terms of assets and return and equity. *Doris C. Dumlao*

A reputable company invites suppliers to join a market auction on February 2004 on the following product lines:

ELECTRICAL APPLIANCES
Rice Cooker Quantity: 6,000 •With steamer•1.8 liter capacity•700 watts• 220 volts a/c•60 hz
Pressure Cooker Quantity: 5,000 •Aluminum •6 quarts
2- Burner Gas Stove Quantity: 5,000 •Stainless •Detachable ttiver and tray•rotating inlet pipe
Desk Fan 16" Quantity 12,000 •Plastic fan blade• Push Button controls• 3 speed•220 volts a/c• 60hz
Dry Iron Quantity: 10,000 •Automatic Controls• Pilot Lamp• Stainless sole plate 1,000 watts •220 volts a/c •60hz

DO IT YOURSELF ITEMS
Single Bed Quantity: 2,000 •Tubing Diameter: 4 post at 1.5 cm (diameter) 12 pieces skeleton frame: 0.5cm (diameter)
Clothes Rack Quantity: 3,000 •Tubing diameter: 2.0cm •with adjustable height
Plastic Chair Quantity: 10,000 pieces for White & Beige colors •6,000 pieces for Black, Maroon & Green Backrest width: 46cm •2.14 to 2.30kg
Storage Box with Wheels Quantity :2,000 pieces •**100 L** •75.5x41x39.5cm •Quantity :2,000 pieces•*50 L*•75.3X41X30cm•
Aro Crates Quantity: 10,000 pieces •52.5x37x31 cm •Weight •1.9 kg8 •Black,maroon, green

HOUSEHOLD/HOUSEWARE FURNISHINGS
Bookshelf 5 layers,open•598x295x1770mm• 18mm particle board•PU paper•Quantity: 3,000 pieces
Stockpot 5,000 pieces •8 piece set•Undersize • 6,8,10 12 quarts •Stainless steel
Water Kettle Aluminum 3,500 pieces of 2.5 liters• 2,500 of 4 liters
Ironing Board 5,000 pieces of Wooden 36"•2,500 pieces of Wooden 42"• 1,500 pieces of Mesh 42"
Hangers 3,500 pieces of Umbrella with 36 Clips •3,500 Umbrella with 24 clips 3,500 pieces of Rectangular with 38 clips •3,500 pieces of Cloth by 10s 3,500 pieces of Tubular by 12s.
Laundry Hampers 5000 pieces •horizontal with lid
Water Container 2,500 pieces •35 liter with cover
Ice Chest 2,500 pieces • White •Size: 23 x 16 x 18
Storage Box with Wheels 100 L•75.5x41x39.5cm•Quantity :2,000 pieces•*50 L*•75.3X41X30cm•

TEXTILE
Men's Jeans 10,000 pairs•12 ounces •Basic 5 pockets •Bio wash •Straight cut •Sizes: 28 to 38 •100% Cotton Pre-shrunk •Riveted •Waist tag includes length, size and in seam •Side loop tag (optional)
Men's Briefs 15,000 pieces •Regular cut •100% cotton •pre-shrunk •outside garter •White •Sizes: Small, medium, large, extra large •Presentation: with care label, contents and size
Men's T-shirt 15,000 pieces •Round neck plain white •100% cotton •Pre-shrunk •Taped neckline Presentation: with care label, contents and size
Ladies' Panties 15,000 pieces •Plain •100% cotton •Semi hip •inside garter •Assorted colors: White, Nude, Blush •Presentation: with care label, with contents and size
Ladies' Brassiere 10,000 pieces •Plain •70% cotton •30% polyester •Full cup •Sizes 32 to 38 Cup A and B •Colors: White, Skintone, Blush •Presentation: with care label, contents and size
Towels 5,000 pieces each of the following • 27 x 54, 1pc. •13 x 31, 1pc. •12 x12, 1 pc.•380 gsm 100% cotton terry •Ring spun yarn •Solid dyed •Sewn edges •Medium colors Presentation: with care label
Pillow 10,000 pieces •18 x 28 •Washable •Non-woven •Vacuum packed •High density •100% fiber fill Anti-dust mite •White •800 to 1,000 gms
Comforter 2,000 pieces •Queen size •Reversible print •1,500 gms •Sewn edges •Fiber fill •70% cotton 30% polyester

OFFICE SUPPLIES
Copy Paper Packaging: 500 sheets per ream •Brightness: 94 •70gsm •Letter: 8 1/2 x 11 Size at quantity of 9,000 Legal: 81/2 x 13 at a quantity of 6,000
Bond Paper Packaging:500 sheets per ream •Brightness 92 •70 gsm •Letter:8 1/2 x 11 at a quantity of 9,000 Legal: 8 1/2 x 13 at a quantity of 6,000

MISCELLANEOUS/SPORTS ITEMS
3 Piece Luggage Set with HandCarry bag 1000 pieces •19", 23" handcarry •19" luggage •Height: 49 cm x Width 36 cm x Depth: 19cm 2 Front pockets •190 density full inside lining •600 density main material: Polyester Non EVA •5.5mm corner wheels •Without combination lock •2 stage trolley handle stop 23" luggage•Height 59cmx Width43.18cmXDepth 27.97cm •2 front pockets 190 density full inside lining •600 density main material polyester•Non EVA 5.5mm corner wheels •Without combination lock •2 stage trolley stop •quantity 2,000.
Mountain Bike *5,000 pieces, Size: 26 21 speed full suspension*•Frame:Steel Suspension 26" Y-type with shock Fork : Suspension 26" standard in Black, silver,red, yellow and blue Rims: 26" 14 gauge x 36 holes Alloy in Silver •Color:Blue/red, yellow red, yellow/black, orange/black
Mountain Bike *10,000 pieces, Size: 26 21 speed* •Frame: Steel Frame. Top tube:38mm, Down tube 48mm •Seat tube 28.66mm.•Fork : Standard steel fork arm •28.6mm in black,silver,green, yellow, blue•Rims: 26" 14 gauge x 36 holes Alloy in Silver•Color: Silver/blue, Yellow/black, Orange/black.

FOOD ITEMS
2,000 sacks Ordinary Rice,50 kg.• 5,000 sacks Ordinary Rice,25kg •4,000 sacks Dinorado Rice,50kg
8,000 sacks Dinorado Rice,25kg.•3,000 Cases Mineral Water, 500mlx24 bottles per case
2,000 cases Mineral Water,500ml x 24 bottles per case •5,000 cases Distilled Water,500mlx24 bottles per case
7,000 cases Distilled Water •350ml x 24 bottles per case •6,000 cases Distilled water •6 Liters
4,000 sacks Medium sized Red Creoly onions,25 kilos per sack •5,000sacks garlic,20 kilos per sack,size: 5-5.5 diamaters.

INTERESTED PARTIES CAN GIVE IN THEIR QUOTATIONS AT auction_35@hotmail.com

PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

(As of February 4, 2004)

STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
BANKS & FINANCIAL SERVICES					
BANKS					
Asiatrust Dev. Bank Inc.	3.7	3.7	3.7	3.7	3,000
Banco de Oro Univ. Bank	17.25	17.25	17.25	17.25	1,500
Bank of the Phil. Islands	48.5	48.5	47	47	698,300
Equitable PCI Bank Inc.	39.5	40	39.5	39.5	2,871,400
Export and Ind. Bank Inc.	0.5	0.51	0.5	0.51	20,000
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	26	26	25.5	26	221,500
Philippine National Bank	24	24	24	24	7,000
Rizal Comm. Banking Corp.	12.5	12.5	12.5	12.5	100
Security Bank Corp.	17	17.5	17	17.5	41,700
Union Bank of the Phil.	26.5	26.5	26.5	26.5	9,400
FINANCIAL SERVICES					
Manulife Financial Corp.	1950	1985	1950	1985	2,070
PCI Leasing & Fin. Inc.	1.34	1.34	1.32	1.32	264,000
Sun Life Financial Inc.	1510	1510	1510	1510	980
COMMERCIAL & INDUSTRIAL					
COMMUNICATION					
ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.	22.5	22.5	22.5	22.5	24,100
Digital Telecom Phils. Inc.	0.69	0.69	0.69	0.69	350,000
Globe Telecom Inc.	845	865	840	850	99,230
Ipeople Inc.	1.18	1.18	1.18	1.18	40,000
Island Info and Tech Inc.	0.046	0.047	0.046	0.047	6,100,000
ISM Communications Corp.	0.04	0.04	0.039	0.039	700,000
Manila Bulletin Pub. Corp.	2.8	2.8	2.8	2.8	15,000
Pilipino Tel. Corp.	1.4	1.4	1.18	1.18	48,032,000
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co.	825	850	825	840	612,070
Philweb Corp.	0.012	0.012	0.012	0.012	5,000,000
POWER & ENERGY					
Manila Electric Co. A	18.75	19	18	18.25	933,400
Manila Electric Co. B	30	30.5	27.5	28.5	4,221,000
Petron Corporation	2.7	2.8	2.7	2.75	3,820,000
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
Asian Terminals Inc.	1.26	1.26	1.26	1.26	7,000
Int'l Container Term'l Sv	3.15	3.2	3.15	3.2	251,000
CONSTRUCTION & OTHER RELATED PRODUCTS					
Union Cement Corp.	1.08	1.08	1.08	1.08	1,000
FOOD, BEVERAGES & TOBACCO					
Alaska Milk Corp.	3.2	3.2	3.2	3.2	70,000
Ginebra San Miguel Inc.	30	30	30	30	3,000
Jollibee Foods Corp.	19	19	18.75	19	263,400
RFM Corp.	0.65	0.65	0.65	0.65	30,000
San Miguel Corp. A	56	56.5	55.5	56	172,100
San Miguel Corp. B	68.5	69.5	68.5	69.5	63,100
Vitarich Corp.	0.26	0.26	0.26	0.26	450,000
HOLDING FIRMS					
Abacus Con Res & Hdg A	0.33	0.33	0.33	0.33	50,000
Ayala Corp.	5.7	6	5.7	5.9	7,555,000
Aboitiz Equity Ventures	3.15	3.2	3.15	3.2	38,000
Ajo.Net Holdings Inc.	0.025	0.025	0.023	0.024	2,700,000
A. Soriano Corp.	0.91	0.95	0.91	0.95	30,000
ATN Holdings Inc.	1.58	1.58	1.58	1.58	100,000
Bacnotan Cons Indus Inc.	9	9.5	8.8	9.5	14,000
Benpres Holdings Corp.	0.62	0.62	0.56	0.56	18,750,000
Basic Consolidated Inc.	0.09	0.09	0.09	0.09	800,000
DMCI Holdings Inc.	0.23	0.23	0.23	0.23	150,000
Filinvest Dev. Corp.	1	1	1	1	20,000
First Phil Hldgs Corp.	22.25	22.25	21.5	21.75	971,500
Global Business Hldgs Inc.	46	48.5	40	48	7,200
Ionics Inc.	1.44	1.44	1.44	1.44	2,000
J.G. Summit Holdings Inc.	1.88	1.88	1.86	1.86	23,000
Macroasia Corp.	0.53	0.53	0.51	0.51	60,000
Megaworld Corp.	1.06	1.08	1.06	1.06	1,650,000
Metro Pacific Corp.	0.3	0.3	0.29	0.29	8,100,000
Prime Media Holdings Inc.	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	20,000
Roxas Holdings Inc.	0.96	0.96	0.96	0.96	230,000
Solid Group. Inc.	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	500,000
SPI Technologies Inc.	13	14	13	14	394,400
MANUFACTURING, DISTRIBUTION & TRADING					
Interphil Labs Inc. A	1.9	1.9	1.9	1.9	1,000
Picop Resources Inc.	0.046	0.046	0.046	0.046	1,200,000
Steniel Manufacturing	0.15	0.15	0.15	0.15	90,000
HOTEL, RECREATION & OTHER SERVICES					
Fairmont Holdings Inc.	0.22	0.22	0.22	0.22	50,000
Leisure & Resorts Corp.	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	400,000
Premiere Ent. Prod. Inc.	0.26	0.26	0.25	0.26	440,000
BONDS, PREFERRED & WARRANTS					
ABS-CBN Hldgs. Corp (Pdr)	22.5	22.5	22	22.25	741,400
PLDT (10% Pref) Series Q	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	700
PLDT (10% Pref) Series R	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	600
PLDT (10% Pref) Series S	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	100
PLDT (10% Pref) Series V	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	2,500
PLDT (10% Pref) Series W	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	2,000
PLDT (10% Pref) Series Y	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	200
PLDT (10% Pref) Series Z	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	1,600
PLDT 10% Pref Series Aa	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	2,300
PROPERTY					
Ayala Land Inc.	6	6.1	6	6.1	9,327,000
Cebu Holdings Inc.	0.34	0.34	0.34	0.34	50,000
C&P Homes Inc.	0.15	0.15	0.15	0.15	310,000
Cyber Bay Corp.	0.13	0.13	0.13	0.13	1,150,000
Empire East Land Inc.	0.23	0.23	0.22	0.22	4,350,000
Filinvest Land Inc.	1.08	1.08	1.06	1.06	6,829,000
Kuok Phil. Properties	0.15	0.175	0.15	0.175	570,000
Fil-Estate Land Inc.	0.185	0.185	0.185	0.185	30,000
Primex Corp.	2.6	2.6	2.6	2.6	50,000
SM Prime Holdings Inc.	5.9	5.9	5.8	5.9	7,334,000
MINING					
Lepanto Cons Mng. Co. A	0.215	0.215	0.215	0.215	300,000
Lepanto Cons. Mng. Co B	0.26	0.26	0.26	0.26	1,500,000
Philex Mining Corp. A	0.39	0.39	0.39	0.39	30,000
Philex Mining Corp. B	0.42	0.42	0.42	0.42	680,000
OIL					
Imperial Res.	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	29,000,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. A	0.0028	0.0028	0.0028	0.0028	80,000,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. B	0.003	0.003	0.003	0.003	10,000,000

	SHARES	VALUE(P)
Bank & Fin Svc	4,140,950	159,796,355.00
Comm'l & Ind'l	116,354,900	933,716,960.00
PRO	30,000,000	108,654,100.00
Mining	2,510,000	751,800.00
OIL	119,000,000	544,000.00
GRAND TOTALS :	272,005,850	1,203,463,215.00

	AVERAGES	
Bank & Fin Svc	446.19	DOWN 6.69
Comm'l & Ind'l	2,192.30	UP 15.80
PRO	550.54	DOWN 1.89
Mining	1,512.52	DOWN 24.68
OIL	1.27	DOWN 0.03
SME	100.00	UNCH 0.00
All Shares Index	932.22	UP 4.55
Composite	1,441.12	UP 3.45

NO. OF ADVANCES: 17, NO. OF DECLINES: 33, NO. OF UNCHANGED: 40, NO. OF TRADED ISSUES: 90, NO. OF TRADES: 3,269

DISCLOSURES

KEPPEL Philippines Holdings Inc. denied having any information that could explain the unusual price movement in the trading of its "B" shares.

* * *

JOSE Antonio Valdez was appointed vice president for marketing of **Philippine Long Distance Telephone Company.**

* * *

FIL-Estate Land Inc. will hold its annual stockholders' meeting on April 15 instead of the first Thursday of March as provided in its by-laws.

* * *

BENPRES Holdings Corp. disclosed the resignation of Vicente Jayme as independent director. Vicente Paterno was elected to replace him.

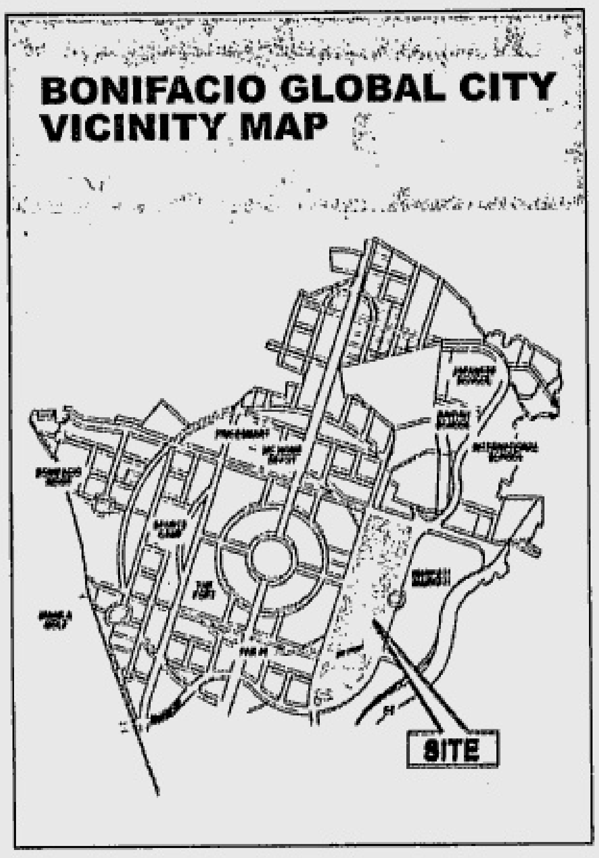
* * *

EXPORT and Industry Bank Inc. said that its newly elected director, Edna Reyes, bought 1 million shares of the bank on the day of her election to the board. Also, Romulo Carandang was appointed assistant compliance officer. ***Compiled by Maricar D. Tolosa, PDI Research***

CURRENCIES

February 4, 2004 Country	Unit	Euro Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	0.797894	1.000000	56.155000
Japan	Yen	0.007563	0.009479	0.532300
United Kingdom	Pound	1.466848	1.838400	103.235400
Hongkong	Dollar	0.102628	0.128624	7.222900
Switzerland	Franc	0.638008	0.799616	44.902400
Canada	Dollar	0.596378	0.747440	41.972500
Singapore	Dollar	0.471429	0.590842	33.178700
Australia	Dollar	0.610477	0.765111	42.964800
Bahrain	Dinar*	2.116541	2.652661	148.960200
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.212772	0.266667	14.974700
Brunei	Dollar	0.470041	0.589102	33.081000
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000094	0.000118	0.006600
Thailand	Baht	0.020432	0.025608	1.438000
UAE	Dirham	0.217244	0.272272	15.289400
Euro	Euro	1.000000	1.253300	70.379100
Argentina	Peso	0.272784	0.341880	19.198300
Brazil	Real	0.272411	0.341413	19.172000
Denmark	Kroner	0.134197	0.168189	9.444700
India	Rupee	0.017633	0.022099	1.241000
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.210000	0.263193	14.779600
Mexico	New Peso	0.071895	0.090106	5.059900
New Zealand	Dollar	0.542489	0.679902	38.179900
Norway	Kroner	0.114387	0.143361	8.050400
Pakistan	Rupee	0.013978	0.017519	0.983800
South Africa	Rand	0.115931	0.145296	8.159100
Korea	Won	0.000683	0.000856	0.048100
Sweden	Kroner	0.108726	0.136266	7.652000
Syria	Pound	0.015493	0.019417	1.090400
Taiwan	Nt Dollar	0.023989	0.030066	1.688400
Venezuela	Bolivar	0.000500	0.000627	0.035200

Awarding of 12-hectare property to Ayala Land heralds new era in residential living



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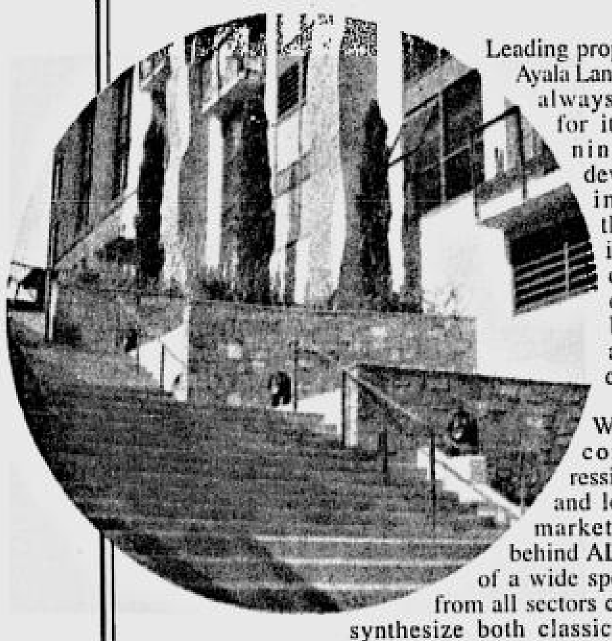
Ayala Land unveils newest residential project

Ayala Land's newest residential project borne out of eight-city journey



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Denmark
England
Netherlands
Germany
France
EUROPE
Chicago
San Francisco
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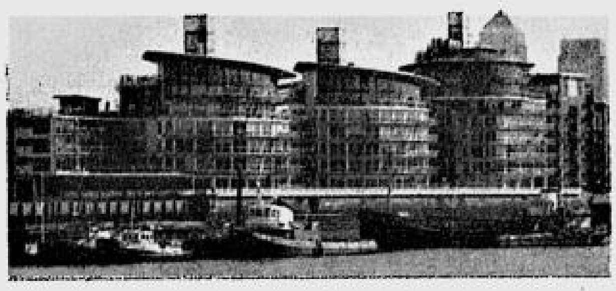

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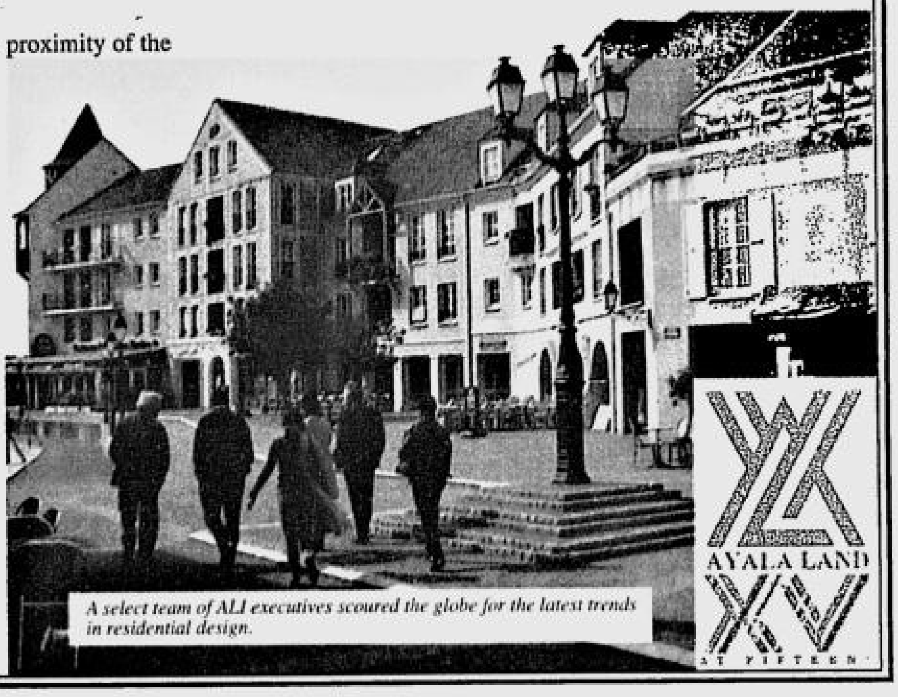

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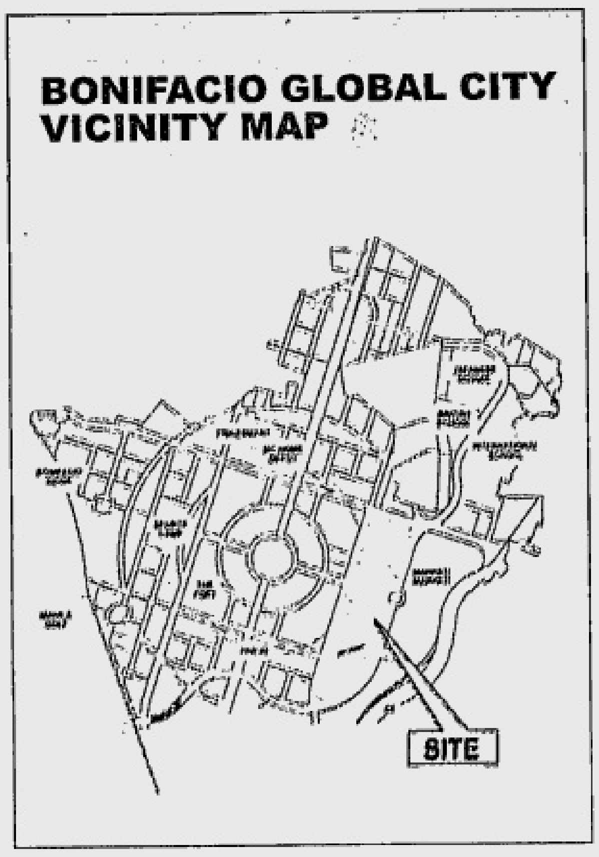
BONIFACIO GLOBAL CITY VICINITY MAP

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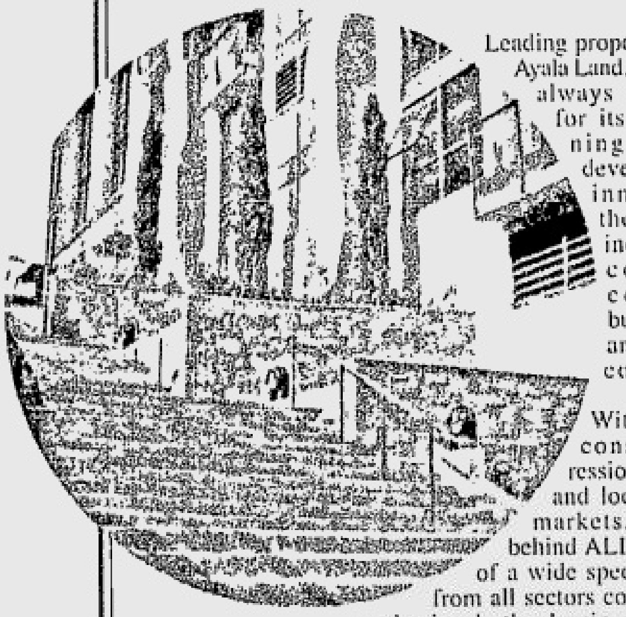

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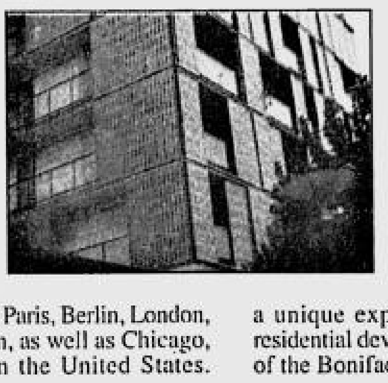

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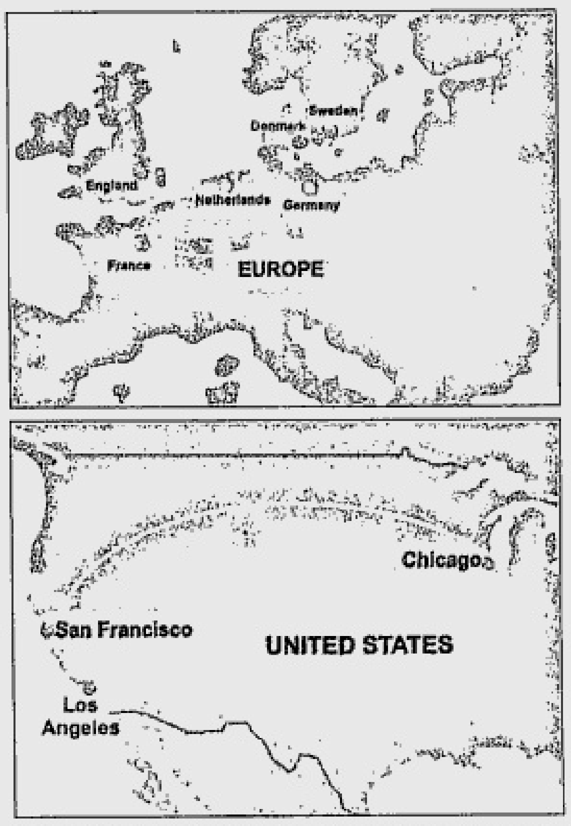

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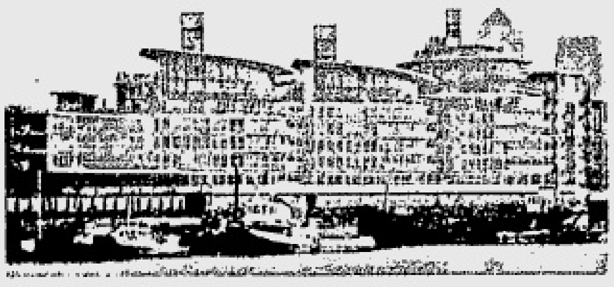

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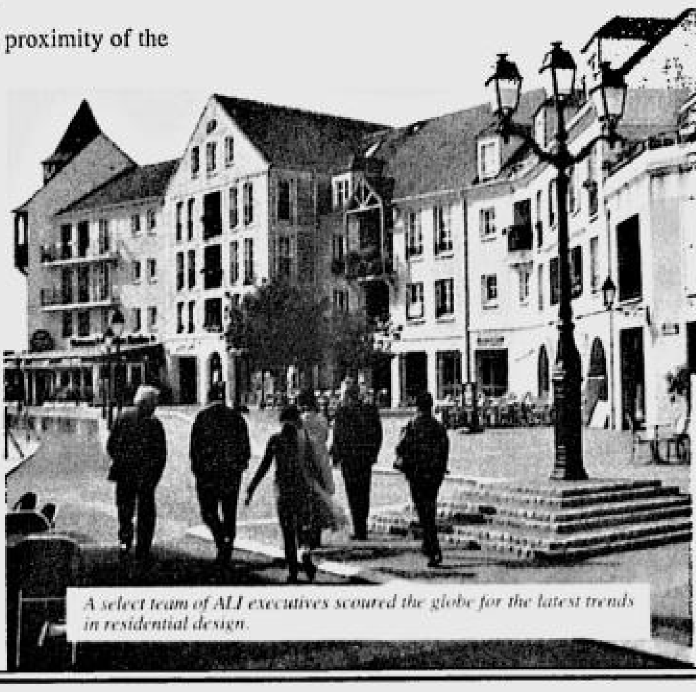

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BSP cuts OFW remittance growth target for '04

By Clarissa S. Batino

THE BANGKO Sentral ng Pilipinas has scaled down its growth target for this year's inflow of dollar remittances from overseas Filipino workers to 3 percent from 5 percent, saying that the original target might not be achievable.

"I think our remittances have hit about $7.6 billion last year, which was within the 6 percent growth target. But this year, we are reviewing the numbers and for the meantime, we are looking at a 3-percent growth on account of reduced deployment of workers," said BSP Deputy Governor Amando Tetangco Jr.

Based on last year's estimated remittance, a 5-percent growth this year would translate to $8 billion while a 3-percent growth would be about $7.8 billion. In 2002, remittances from OFWs reached $7.2 billion.

"We are just being conservative. We will review the numbers on a quarterly basis to see if the $8-billion mark can still be hit," said Tetangco.

The BSP official explained that while the deployment of overseas workers had been slowing down since last year, particularly for the land-based, Filipinos were being hired for higher-paying jobs. Also, deployment of sea-based workers continued to go up.

Remittances from overseas workers help boost the country's dollar supply. A slowdown in remittance is not good for the peso since a shortage of dollars in the spot market would push the peso down. The first quarter is a lean period for OFW remittances.

Tetangco said OFW remittances were not the only source of dollars for the country. The Philippines also rely on foreign direct and portfolio investments although in times of uncertainty, direct and portfolio investments can be erratic.

The BSP also estimated that more than $5 billion in OFW remittances passing through informal channels like couriers and money-changers were not being booked by the government.

"I think the number of sea-based overseas workers will continue to increase while that of land-based workers will start to pick up soon. We are hoping to send more nurses and other Filipinos to higher paying jobs, which will not only improve their status but will also allow them to send more money to their families," said BSP Governor Rafael Buenaventura earlier.

The BSP is counting on higher OFW remittances this year to offset the slowdown in foreign direct investments and sluggish exports.

Buenaventura pointed out that the slowdown in the deployment of land-based workers affected mostly the low-income workers, including domestic helpers. The number of caregivers, engineers and performing artists going overseas continued to increase.

Foreign exchange inflows from overseas workers account for nearly 85 percent of the country's gross earnings.

Commercial banks report about 85 percent of total remittances while foreign exchange firms report 10 percent of the total. The data on the remaining 5 percent come from offshore banking units.

Globe to convert dollar loans to peso IOUs

By Abigail L. Ho

GLOBE Telecom Inc., the telecommunications arm of the Ayala group of companies, plans to further strengthen its balance sheet this year by converting more of its dollar-denominated debt into peso loans.

Globe chief financial officer Delfin Gonzalez said that as of the end of last year, the firm's dollar-denominated loans accounted for 51 percent of its total debt, down from a high of 85 percent.

This was achieved through the conversion of $343 million in long-term dollar debt to peso loans.

Globe's liabilities stood at P91 billion as of end-2003, while total debt was placed at P56 billion.

Gonzalez said that Globe has around $1 billion in maturing obligations from 2004 to 2012, with $162 million falling due this year.

Another $144 million will mature in 2005, $158 million in 2006, $108 million in 2007 and $438 million in the 2008-2012 period.

Average principal repayment in the next three years would reach around $155 million, he said.

While Globe sees an improvement in its debt ratios, Gonzalez said earnings before income tax, depreciation and amortization would likely decline in the coming years as most of Globe's future growth would come form the lower-income market segments.

"Our EBITDA margin of 59 percent (in 2003) is on the high side of the range. Given that growth will come from the provincial and prepaid sectors, there may be slight reductions in EBITDA margins in 2005," he said.

Globe last year posted a roughly 50-percent jump in profits to P10.3 billion from P6.9 billion the previous year.

The surge was mainly driven by strong service revenue, which included earnings from voice calls, short messaging service (SMS) and multimedia messaging service (MMS).

New privatization approach for Napocor power plants OKd

By Ronnel W. Domingo

ORTIZ RUDY ESPERAS

THE JOINT Congressional Power Commission has approved a new system of grouping National Power Corp.'s power generation plants for purposes of privatization.

Alan T. Ortiz, president of the National Transmission Corp., said in a briefing with INQUIRER Business that the JCPC had allowed a "hybrid system" of grouping Napocor's generation companies or gencos.

Ortiz said the new system veered away from the old grouping scheme that "lumped together the good eggs and the bad eggs."

The new system will group the generation companies in accordance with their desirability to investors.

"The market has changed," he said. "Investors don't want to do things that (old) way."

Ortiz added: "The bad eggs (power plants that investors do not want) can be refurbished and can be sold separately. Besides, some of them are desirable not as power facilities but as real estate because the land they sit on may be valuable for other uses."

He cited as an example the Rockwell complex in Makati City, which used to house a power plant but was converted into a commercial area complete with a shopping mall and condominium projects.

Ortiz said that, except for some "bureaucratic issues" that need to be addressed, the government was ready to sell the gencos.

Asked how the gencos were grouped under the new system, Ortiz said he did not have the information at hand.

"But desirable deals like the Navotas plant would be the first to be put in the auction block," he said.

According to the Power Sector Assets and Liabilities Management Corp., other power plants included in the first batch of gencos to be sold are two decommisioned plants in Manila and Bataan and small hydro facilities in Bukidnon, Bohol and Negros Oriental.

GMA backs declaration of NSC as ecozone

By Michelle V. Remo

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo is supporting a proposal to declare the newly reopened plant of the National Steel Corp. an economic zone.

This would provide NSC with tax exemptions and an income tax holiday, which would help protect the investments of NSC investor Global Infrastructure Holdings Ltd.

Ms Macapagal said granting these incentives to NSC investors would help shore up the firm's dollar reserves.

Pramod Mittal, chair of GIHL's holding company Ispat Group, said that at least 60 percent of NSC's initial production would be exported to Asian markets.

GIHL, however, would have to increase its exports to at least 70 percent of production to qualify for an economic zone status.

GIHL said it planned to increase NSC's annual production capacity from the current 1.5 million metric tons to 2 million metric tons.

GIHL would invest some $90 million this year as working capital to start up the steel plant's operation. An additional $700 million will be poured in over the next few years to complete NSC's rehabilitation.

Mittal said the company was optimistic it would break even within the year and generate $850 million in revenue in 2005.

"We are committed to do the job (operating NSC) efficiently. We are not here to go back," said Mittal in a press briefing.

GIHL noted that NSC could generate $750 million in annual revenue and contribute about P4 billion per year to the country's gross domestic product.

Ms Macapagal added during the formal reopening of NSC last Tuesday that the resumption of the plant's operations would revitalize the country's steel industry and make Iligan the center of industrialization efforts in Mindanao.

RP, Japan hold 2-day free trade talks

PHILIPPINE and Japanese officials yesterday began two days of talks here in pursuit of a bilateral free trade agreement (FTA), officials of both countries said.

Japanese Deputy Foreign Minister Ichiro Fujisaki and his delegation were in closed door meetings with their Filipino counterparts, they said.

Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi and President Macapagal Arroyo had agreed to the talks in December, when they met in Tokyo for a dialogue between Japan and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean).

Ms Macapagal earlier expressed hope that the talks would be completed quickly because there were "very few obstacles" to an FTA, despite Japan's highly protected farm and labor markets.

Yesterday's talks were aimed at identifying procedures in negotiations and the items that would be covered in the accord, diplomats said. Negotiations are set to continue today.

Japan is the Philippines' second largest trade partner next to the United States. Two-way trade in 2002 amounted to $12.52 billion.

Japan is also pursuing similar agreements with Malaysia and Thailand. Its first bilateral free trade agreement, with Asean-member Singapore, took effect last year. *AFP*

Insurance industry consolidation seen

From page B1

Canada and Manufacturers Life (Manulife)—which aggregately controlled 56.66 percent of total premium income from the Philippine life insurance market. Twenty-one local firms shared the remaining 43.34 percent of the pie.

Eleven out of the 20 new foreign entrants have since then shut down, merged with other firms or sold out to surviving firms, realizing that the lucrative market was but an illusion.

They should have taken into consideration not only the size of the population but also the people's capability to buy insurance policies, says Vicente Ayllon, chair of the biggest Filipino life insurance firm Insular Life Assurance Co.

At present, the three original foreign life insurers still control the bulk or 51 percent of the market, while new foreign players have gobbled up a 15.49-percent share. The share held by local firms shrunk to 33.4 percent.

Insular Life, which is the second largest in the business in terms of net worth, remained the leading all-Filipino player.

Its assets and total premiums were much higher than the next five biggest local players combined—Ayala Life, Grepalife, Cocolife, Fortune Life and Manila Bankers Life.

Consolidation

The shakeout among foreign insurers which started three years ago gave fresh merger and acquisition (M&A) opportunities especially to foreign players who were determined to stay in the ball game.

One of the early birds, Manulife was able to acquire the businesses of four new entrants: Metropolitan Life and John Hancock of the US; CMG Life of Australia and Zurich Life of Switzerland.

New player Pru Life of the UK was able to absorb two: ING Life of the Netherlands and All State Life of the US.

Some local companies likewise made new acquisitions. The Professional Group took over the operations of GE Life while Paramount Life gobbled up Aegon Life of the Netherlands. Pioneer Life bought back the shares held by former partner Allianz AG of Germany.

To date, there are only 34 players left—22 local and 12 foreign. All in all, there were 15 firms that had left or shut down operations, four of which are local life insurers.

The industry's top three are Philam, which built a formidable business in the country and started with a clean slate after World War II; Insular Life, which kept the business going despite losses from the same war, and Sun Life of Canada.

In a briefing with INQUIRER business reporters and editors, Ayllon said that despite the country's big population, the penetration rate was very small. Selling insurance here, he said, was difficult because only a small segment of the population could afford such a product. Half of his company's business, he said, was from repetitive transactions or sales of more products to the same people who had bought earlier.

The growth in manpower employed by insurance agencies also does not ensure a corresponding growth in premium income. In 2001 and 2002, for instance, there was a sharp drop in the premium income generated by the life insurance industry despite the expansion of its workforce.

Incipient market

Insurance markets can be classified into three levels—fully mature, transitional and incipient or emerging. The Philippines obviously falls under the third category.

Aylllon explained that the low levels of income translated to low demand for insurance, which was the reason behind the abysmal performance of the industry in the Philippines and Thailand.

In 1994 to 2000, however, the insurance density in Thailand improved while that of the Philippines remained stagnant, he said. Insurance penetration in both Thailand and the Philippines remained flat during the period.

Insurance density and penetration are some of the key indicators, but not the perfect yardsticks, of insurance consumption. Insurance density or premiums per capita represents the average spending on insurance by each person and shows the current state of the insurance industry. Insurance penetration, or the ratio of premiums to GDP (gross domestic product), can be used as a rough indicator of the industry's growth potential.

Ayllon explained that insurance consumption also depended on a host of other factors such as the level of urbanization, monetary stability, quality of bureaucracy, corruption and the development of the whole financial system.

"Perhaps a reason for the relatively poor performance of the Philippine insurance industry is the growth of the pre-need industry, which concentrates on future payment for health, pension, education as well as funeral/interment needs," Ayllon said. The relatively lax regulation in the pre-need industry, he added, accounted for its rapid growth.

"It is also possible that the loss of confidence in most Thai financial institutions, which succumbed to the 1997 Asian contagion, led people to rechannel their assets to insurance products instead of bank deposits and the like," Ayllon said, explaining why the Philippines had lagged behind Thailand in terms of growth of the life insurance industry.

He noted that at the height of the crisis, the Bank of Thailand stripped 58 finance companies of the license to operate. Ayllon stressed that the guaranteed investment returns provided by most life insurance products exceeded bank deposit rates and proved to be very irresistible for the Thais.

Prospects

Considering the widely untapped market, Ayllon said the Philippine insurance industry had ample room to grow. He said the rate of growth, however, would depend on regulations and economic expansion.

He said the sector would be greatly affected by "the government's ability to strike a balance between regulating the industry and ensuring its viability through legislation and regulation."

On the industry's prospects this year, Ayllon said there was no hard and fast answer especially since the country was undergoing an election year—and an unusual one given that the incumbent president is running.

"If insurance consumption is linked strongly to GDP as what most of us believe, then the insurance industry will likely contract," Ayllon said.

Historically, or at least during the Ramos and Estrada regimes, he noted that GDP growth had been slowing down every after elections.

At best, Ayllon said he was expecting the life insurance industry to grow by around 15 percent this year, the sector's five-year compounded yearly growth rate.

Acquisitions

Given the stiff market conditions, the life insurance sector may see some further consolidation in years to come.

Most of the big insurers have recently moved to diversify their revenue stream by going into bancassurance—or selling insurance products through bank branches.

Philam Life, for instance, had teamed up with the country's third biggest lender Equitable PCI Bank in bancassurance. It was said to be open to opportunities to expand its business through acquisitions.

Ayllon said Philam and Sun Life of Canada had separately proposed a merger with Insular Life. However, Insular Life can not undertake any merger because it has yet to shed off its mutual status. (In 1976, the company became the first Filipino life insurance company to mutualize or transfer ownership from stockholders to policyholders). As such, it can not issue shares to effect any merger.

Also, he said he would not like to see Insular Life, the first Filipino life insurance company whose history goes way back to 1910, to lose its identity in favor of any foreign company.

He, likewise, said Insular Life was in no hurry to pursue demutualization, if this would result in the undervaluation of the company's shares given the difficult market conditions.

"Even if we demutualize, Insular Life's identity will remain," he said.

But Ayllon said there was another way to expand the business and that is to acquire other life insurers.

Premium Volumes per Capita and Insurance Penetration (2001)

	Population (million)	Premium volume per capita (in USD)			Insurance penetration (Insurance/GDP)		
		Life insurance	Non-life insurance	Total	Life insurance	Non-life insurance	Total
Japan	127.1	2,806.7	701.1	3,507.8	8.85%	2.21%	11.07%
Hong Kong	6.7	1,254.3	296.6	1,550.9	5.12%	1.21%	6.34%
Taiwan	22.3	760.2	445.2	1,205.4	6.03%	3.53%	9.57%
South Korea	47.7	762.9	296.5	1,059.5	8.69%	3.38%	12.06%
Singapore	4.1	710.7	266.1	976.8	3.39%	1.27%	4.66%
Malaysia	23.8	129.5	68.7	198.2	3.39%	1.80%	5.18%
Thailand	62.4	34.1	19.9	53.9	1.85%	1.08%	2.93%
China	1,276.2	12.2	5.7	17.9	1.34%	0.63%	1.97%
Philippines	77.0	6.4	5.4	11.8	0.69%	0.58%	1.28%
India	1,032.2	9.1	2.4	11.5	2.15%	0.56%	2.71%
Indonesia	213.8	3.6	4.1	7.7	0.53%	0.60%	1.13%
US	276.8	1,601.9	1,664.0	3,266.0	4.40%	4.57%	8.97%
UK	59.5	935.0	1,103.6	2,038.6	3.91%	4.61%	8.52%
Germany	82.3	1,855.6	826.9	2,658.5	8.24%	3.67%	11.91%

SOURCE: SWISS RE, ECONOMIC RESEARCH & CONSULTING, SIGMA NO. 6/2002

US to urge G7 to focus on growth, not dollar

WASHINGTON—The United States will urge other Group of Seven wealthy nations to work on growth at a weekend meeting of finance chiefs instead of focusing on a US dollar fall that has stung European and Japanese exporters.

Analysts say even if the US trading partners manage to win a public nod toward their anxiety over the dollar's decline, that will likely amount to nothing more than a "tweaking" of communique language—well short of any substantive agreement to halt the greenback's fall.

A cheaper US dollar—down 9 percent against a basket of currencies since finance chiefs met Sept. 19-20 in Dubai, already is boosting US exports without pushing inflation up.

US Treasury Secretary John Snow and G7 counterparts from Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy and Japan—together with central bank chiefs from each country—meet Friday and Saturday in balmy Boca Raton, Florida, under the scrutiny of edgy financial market participants.

Again on Tuesday, Snow effectively ruled out an accord on currencies in Boca Raton.

At briefings before the Florida meeting, senior US Treasury officials have emphasized they want the Florida meeting to zero in on structural reforms within each G7 country, based on an "agenda for reform" adopted in Dubai.

That document committed each G7 member to plans aimed at spurring economic activity, from health-care reform in France to pension reform in Italy and tort reform in the United States, with a goal of boosting global growth.

The Dubai communique broke new ground by urging "more flexibility in exchange rates"—an inclusion taken then as a signal to sell dollars though it appeared aimed largely at China, which pegs its yuan currency to the US dollar.

Economist Lynn Reaser of Banc of America Capital Management in St. Louis, Missouri, said it was possible the G7 ministers could modify the Dubai wording, "keeping the focus on markets as a key determinant of value, but urging Asian economies to follow a more orderly course." *Reuters*

Nations push for Americas trade deal

PUEBLA, Mexico—Nations negotiating a free trade pact for the Americas have moved a step closer to bridging their differences and signing a pact by early 2005, Mexican Economy Minister Fernando Canales said on Tuesday.

A proposal from the United States, Canada, Chile, Costa Rica and Mexico was presented to the South American Mercosur trade bloc in recent days and addresses points of contention, including export subsidies, government procurement, services and investment.

The proposal was put forward in the Mexican city of Puebla on Tuesday, as was another plan by Mercosur nations, Argentine Trade Secretary Martin Redrado told reporters.

While differences remain between the five nations and the Mercosur bloc, "this heralds an intermediate point of consensus that would signal an important advance," Canales told reporters at a meeting of nations negotiating the Free Trade Area of the Americas, or FTAA, agreement.

Trade officials began meeting in Puebla this week to map plans for the agreement among 34 Western Hemisphere countries by January 2005. "We are committed to the January 2005 date," said Redrado. *Reuters*

South Korea prices jump

SEOUL—South Korea's wholesale prices jumped to show their biggest monthly rise since the 1997-98 Asia financial crisis in January, propelled by spiraling food and imported raw material prices, the central bank said on Wednesday.

The Producer Price Index (PPI), a measure of wholesale prices, rose 1.4 percent in January on the month, double the increase in December, the Bank of Korea said in a statement.

It was the strongest monthly rise since February 1998, when the PPI climbed 2.4 percent and was also the seventh consecutive monthly increase in wholesale prices.

"Rising demand for fruit and vegetables over the Lunar New Year holidays and a sharp rise in fishery prices drove up prices, as well as higher oil and raw material prices," the central bank said.

Climbing wholesale prices, in part blamed on a weaker won against many key currencies, are fanning worries that strong inflationary pressure might hamper any significant recovery in the South Korean economy, which is emerging from a brief recession.

Although the won was virtually flat against the US dollar in 2003, it fell 11 percent against the Japanese yen, a blow for importers who depend heavily on Japanese goods. *Reuters*

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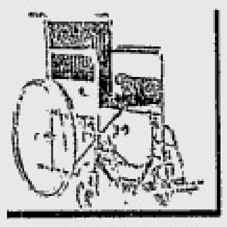

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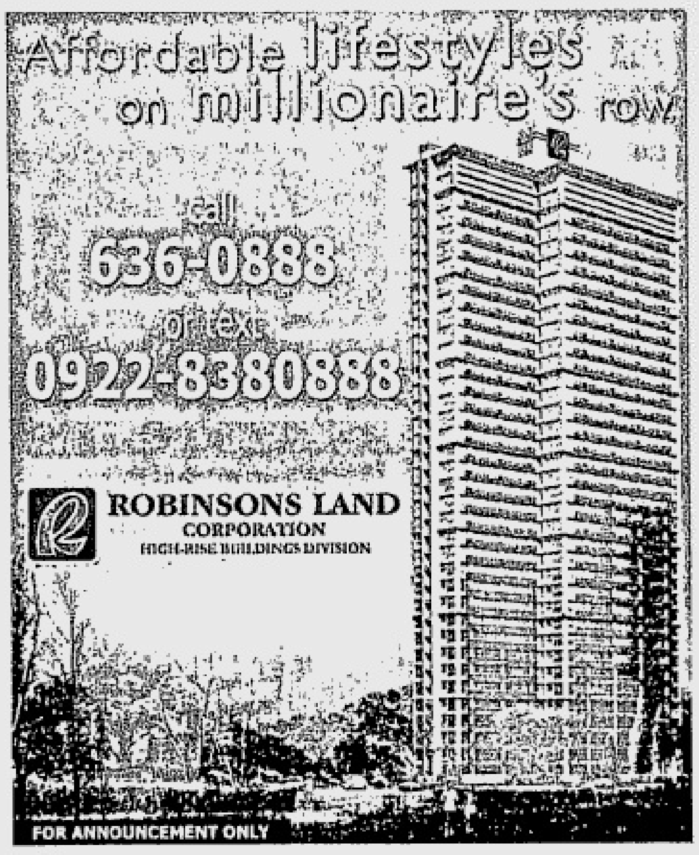

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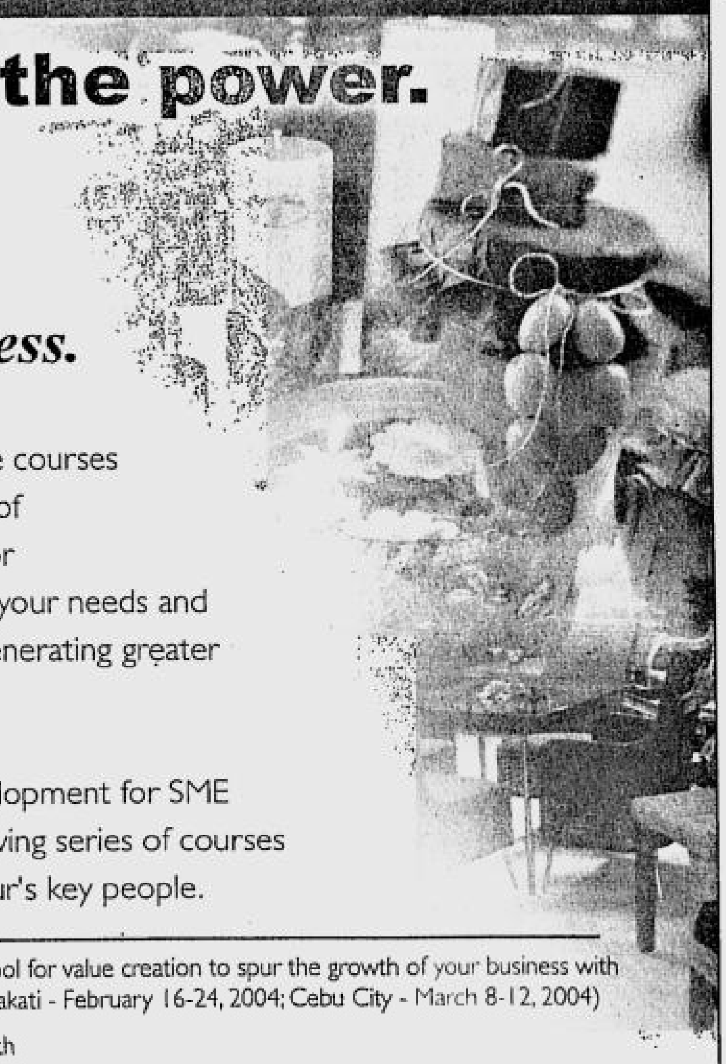

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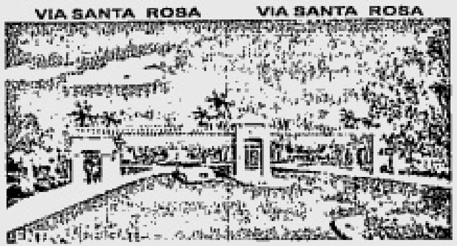

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LEGAL NOTICE

Notice is given that Canlubang Golf & Country Club Stock Cert.# 0059 in the name of Bonifacio I. Sison was lost. If no contest received new stock cert. will be issued (PDI-Jan 29,Feb.5 & 12, 2004)

Notice is given that the estate of late LEON F. PELAEZ was extrajudicially settled by his heir as per Doc. No. 490; Page No. 112; Book No. 56; Series of 2003 before Notary Public Manuel F. De Jesus of Quezon City.
PDI-Jan 29, Feb 5 &12,2004)

INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES

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Republic of the Philippines
Province of Bataan
Municipality of Orion
OFFICE OF THE BAC CHAIRMAN

INVITATION TO BID

(ITB)

February 5, 2004
World Bank/IBRD Loan No. 7152-PH

The Government of the Philippines has received a loan from International Bank for Reconstruction and Development towards the cost of the ARCDPII and intends to apply part of the funds to cover eligible payments under the following contracts located at the Barangays Bilolo and Gen. Lim, Municipality of Orion, Province of Bataan. The Bidding is open to all bidders from eligible source countries as define in the Guideline: Procurement under IBRD Loan and IDA Credits.

The Municipality of Orion, Province of Bataan and implementing partner of the DAR for ARCDPII invites sealed bids from eligible bidders for the Rehabilitation of the 7.90 kilometers of Bilolo-Gen. Lim Farm to Market Road under Contract Number RIRR 03 014 01 ORI-B.

Project Duration: 300 Calendar Days
Bidding Documents: PHP 3,000.00
Minimum Bid Security: PHP 280,000.00
Bid Closing Date: March 9, 2004, **Time:** 10:00 a.m.

DESCRIPTION OF WORKS:

Item No.	Scope of Works	Quantity	Unit
10	Clearing and Grubbing	15,800.00	Sq. Mtrs.
11(1)	Scarifying Existing Macadam Asphalt	13,200.00	Sq. Mtrs.
12	Roadway & Drainage Excavation	6,554.00	Cu. Mtrs.
14(1)	Embankment from Roadway Exc.	6,554.00	Cu. Mtrs.
14(2)	Borrow Materials	2,065.00	Cu. Mtrs.
20	Aggregate Sub-base Course	3,132.00	Cu. Mtrs.
21	Aggregate Base Course	3,204.00	Cu. Mtrs.
31	Portland Cement Concrete Pavement (3,500psi)	10,240.00	Sq. Mts.
50(3)	Underdrains (610 dia. RCPC)	318.00	Ln. Mtrs.
51	Grouted Riprap (Open Canal)	6,000.00	Ln. Mtrs.
SPL2	Junction Box	53.00	Units
SPL3	Outfall/Headwall	53.00	Units

Minimum Equipments Required

Bulldozer (1 unit) - owned; Road Roller Vibratory (9 ton min. 2 unit) - owned: Road Grader (2 unit) - owned; Concrete Mixer (2 units) - owned; Vibratory Plate Compactor (2 units); Backhoe with endloader (1 unit) - owned or lease; Loader (1 unit)-owned: Dump Truck (4 units) - owned; Water truck (1 unit) - owned; survey instruments-leased/owned.

A complete set of bidding documents maybe purchase by the interested bidders at the BAC Secretariat Office of the Municipality of Orion, Province of Bataan starting **February 6, 2004** from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. upon payment of a non-refundable fee of PHP3,000.00 for each set. Pre-bid conference will be held in the same address on **February 20, 2004** at 10.00 a.m.

Bids shall be valid for a period of 90 days after Bid opening and must be accompanied by a security deposit of PHP280,000.00 in form: Cash, Certified Check, Manager's Check, Bank Guarantee, on a free convertible currency, and shall be delivered to the BAC Secretariat Office of the Municipality of Orion, Province of Bataan, on or before the Bid closing date on **March 9, 2004** at 10:00 a.m. at which time the Bids will be opened in the presence of the Bidders who wish to attend.

The LGU-BAC ARCDPII of Orion, Bataan reserves the right to reject any or all bids, waive any defect or formality, assume no obligation whatsoever to compensate indemnity to the contractor/bidder for any expenses that they may incur in the preparation of bid and to accept the lowest evaluated, responsive and complying bid.

(Sgd.) **MR. ANDRES R. AVORQUE**
Chairman LGU-BAC-ARCDPII

(PDI - Feb. 5, 2004)

NATIONAL FOOD AUTHORITY
Region VII, Cebu City

ERRATUM

This is to correct the Invitation to Apply for Eligibility and To Bid for the Integrated Cargo Handling Services (ICHS) in NFA Cebu Provincial Office as published on **January 31, 2004.** Correction is as follows:

The **NATIONAL FOOD AUTHORITY (NFA)** invites all interested parties to register with NFA and to apply for eligibility and to bid for forty two million two hundred ninety eight thousand five hundred thirty one pesos (42,298,531.00). Approved Budget Contract of Integrated Cargo Handling Services (ICHS) in NFA, Cebu Provincial Office.

Schedule of Bidding Activities:

➢ Issuance of List of Eligibility Requirements	**February 9-15, 2004**
➢ Deadline for Submission of Eligibility Requirements	**February 18, 2004**
➢ Issuance of Notice of Eligibility or Non-Eligibility	**February 12-20, 2004**
➢ Issuance of Bid Documents	**February 19-25, 2004**
➢ Pre-Bidding Conference @ 2 p.m.	**March 4, 2004**
➢ Submission and Opening of Bid Envelopes @ 2 p.m.	**March 16, 2004**

(Sgd.) **FLO G. PASCUAL**
Regional Director

(PDI - Feb. 5, 2004)

Philippine Daily Inquirer
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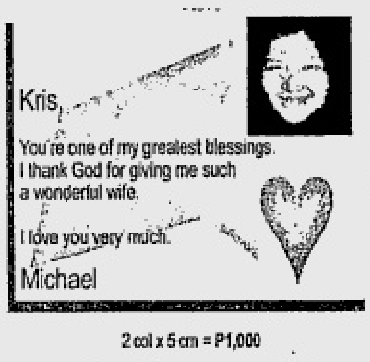
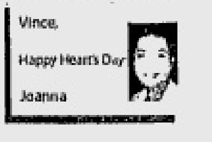


Kris,
You're one of my greatest blessings.
I thank God for giving me such a wonderful wife.
I love you very much.
Michael

2 col x 5 cm = P1,000



Vince,
Happy Heart's Day
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I love you more.
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SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMMISSION
SEC Building, EDSA, Greenhills
Mandaluyong City
Corporation Finance Department

IN THE MATTER OF:

PLI FINANCING COMPANY, INC.
(Formerly, PLI Lending Corporation)

APPLICATION FOR A CERTIFICATE OF AUTHORITY TO OPERATE AS A FINANCING COMPANY

NOTICE AND ORDER

Notice is hereby given that the above-named corporation has filed an application for a Certificate of Authority to engage in financing business in accordance with Sections 2, 4, and 5 of the Rules and Regulations to implement the Provisions of Republic Act No. 8556 (The Financing Company Act of 1998). Its principal office shall be at 30 San Mateo Road, Antonio, Alicia, Isabela.

Structure of the Applicant:	
Authorized Capital Stock	P2,500,000.00
Subscribed Capital Stock	2,500,000.00
Paid-up Capital Stock	1,850,000.00

According to the papers/documents presented, the following persons are the directors/officers of the corporation:

Name	Position
Valentino S. Grospe	President
Vicky R. Grospe	Director/Treasurer
Anita Yrevaire	Director
Fermin S. Grospe	Director
Shirley G. Yrevaire	Director/Secretary

This Notice and Order shall be published in a newspaper of general circulation in the Philippines once a week for two (2) consecutive weeks and shall be simultaneously posted in a public and conspicuous place in the City/Municipality where the office of the company is proposed to be located and in the office of the Commission.

Any interested party may oppose the application in writing, personally or through counsel within two (2) weeks after the last publication of the Notice. If the Commission finds that the requirements of R.A. 8556, the implementing Rules and Regulations and other pertinent laws have been complied with and no valid reason exists for the disapproval of the subject application, the Commission shall take appropriate action on said application.

SO ORDERED
January 14, 2004

(Sgd.) **JUSTINA F. CALLANGAN**
Director

(PDI–Jan. 29 & Feb. 5, 2004)

BOARD OF INVESTMENTS

NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that the application of **BULACAN HOUSING & AGRO-INDUSTRIAL (BUHAI) INC.** with office address at **Room 201 Gabriel III Building, San Miguel Avenue, Ortigas, Pasig City** for registration with the Board of Investments under Book I of the Omnibus Investments Code of 1987, otherwise known as E.O. 226, as Amended, as **New Export Producer of Cattle Feeds** with project site at **Sta. Lucia, Angat, Bulacan** has been officially accepted on **December 18, 2003** and is currently being processed.

Any person with valid objections to or pertinent comments on the above-mentioned application may file his/her objection, in writing under oath, with the BOI within one (1) week from the date of this publication.

Issued this 18th day of December 2003.

(Sgd.) **FRANCISCO C. CHAVEZ**
Director
Project Evaluation and Registration Department

(PDI–Feb. 5, 2004)

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NATIONAL FOOD AUTHORITY
Quezon City

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The **NATIONAL FOOD AUTHORITY (NFA)** invites all interested bidders to apply for eligibility and to bid for the Acquisition of the following IT Equipment and Software:

		Approved Budget
Lot 1	1 unit Security Applicance/Firewall	P 400,000.00
Lot 2	1,500 licenses Anti-Virus for Server/ Desktop Gateway	2,045,300.00
Lot 3	300 licenses Antigen 7.0 Anti-Virus for Domino	400,000.00
Lot 4	108 units Personal Computers	3,605,000.00
Lot 5	16 units Laptop	1,095,000.00
Lot 6	1 Personal Computer for Desktop Publishing	150,000.00

The schedule of bidding activities is as follows:

January 29 - February 6, 2004	Issuance and Submission of Eligibility Requirements
February 10, 2004 (5:00 p.m.)	Last Day for Submission of Eligibility Requirements
February 2-12, 2004	Issuance of Bid Documents
February 19, 2004 (10:00 a.m.)	Pre-bidding Conference NFA Boardroom, 10th Floor
March 3, 2004 (9:00 - 9:45 a.m.)	Submission of Bids
(10:00 a.m.)	Opening of Bids

List of eligibility requirements and forms can be secured from and submitted to BAC Secretariat, Office of the Deputy Administrator for Finance and Administration (ODAFA), 7th Floor Matimyas Building, 101 E. Rodriguez Sr. Avenue, Quezon City. Bidding documents may likewise be secured from BAC Secretariat and the same shall be issued to duly registered/eligible bidders upon payment of P2,000.00, non-refundable fee. For inquiries, please contact the BAC Secretariat at Telephone Nos. 712-0453 and 712-3341 Local 8702.

Any eligible bidders can bid for one, a combination or all of the lots.

NFA RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY OR ALL BIDS, TO WAIVE ANY FORMALITY IN THE BIDS RECEIVED, PROVIDED THAT SUCH WAIVER DOES NOT REFER TO A MAJOR DEVIATION IN A BID AND TO ACCEPT ONLY SUCH BIDS WHICH ARE ADVANTAGEOUS TO THE NATIONAL FOOD AUTHORITY.

(Sgd.) **PEDRO S. HERNANDO, JR.**
Deputy Administrator & Chairman, BAC

(PDI - Jan. 29 & Feb. 5, 2004)

DBP Development Bank of the Philippines

INVITATION TO BID

The Development Bank of the Philippines will receive sealed bids on February 18, 2004, 2:00 p.m., Auditorium of the DBP Head Office, Sen. Gil Puyat Avenue. cor. Makati Ave., Makati City for the following properties on CASH BASIS:

CODE	LOCATION	DESCRIPTION	MINIMUM BID
REAL ESTATE			
METRO MANILA			
AMD-EL-104	Galas, Quezon City (bounded by Luskot, Serrano Laktaw and Pedro Paterno Sts.)	2,400 m² industrial/residential lots (TCT Nos. N-171474 and 171477) with bldg. & imprvmts.	P 25,200,000.00
CWB-12	No. 51, Bignay St., Project 2, Quezon City	203.6m² residential lot (TCT N-254994) with bldg. & imprvmts.	P 4, 517,800.00
CWB-23	No. 29, Coronet cor. Corvette St., Fairview Park Subd., Quezon City	502 m² residential lot (TCT N-255070) with bldg. & imprvmts.	P 3, 112,600.00
AMD-ML-105	Ocean Park Avenue, Ocean Park Subd. (Bagbag), Novaliches, Quezon City	479 m² vacant residential lot (TCT N-213670)	1,724,400.00
AMD-PY-106	Lot 6, Blk. 2, DBP Village II, Almanza, Las Piñas	277 m² (TCT No. 352291)	P 1,662,000.00
AMD-ML-107	Vinegar St., Llenado Subd., Karuhatan, Valenzuela City	465 m² two (2) adjoining parcels of vacant residential lots (TCT Nos. V-61056 & V-61057)	P 1,512,000.00
BULACAN			
AMD-PY-109	Bgy. Matang Tubig, Baliuag	21,533 m² (TCT Nos. T-162317, T-162318 & T-162319) with bldg. & imprvmts.	P 15,213,500.00
NUEVA ECIJA			
CWB-1	Poblacion, Rizal	1,000 m² (TCT N-200001) w/ bldg. & imprvmts.	P 671,900.00
QUEZON			
AMD-ML-108	Mamala, Sariaya	62,108 m² interior lot (TCT T-392734)	P 23,078,600.00
RIZAL			
CRA-32a-c	Narra St., Loremar Homes, Bo. San Isidro, Antipolo City	300 m² each vacant residential lot (TCT Nos. R-11000, R-11001 and R-11002)	P 750,000.00 per title
CHATTELS (sale on "as-is, where-is" basis)			
AMD-PAY-109a	Brgy. San Isidro, Minalin, Pampanga	1 unit 75 KVA generating set/2 units conveorized powder coating oven/1 unit shearing machine/1 unit 50-ton hydraulic machine/1 unit power press	P 1,194,000.00
AMD-PAY-109b	No. 6 Banner St., Bagong Ilog, Pasig City	1 unit PVL shrinking machine/2 units hydraulic press (250 ton capacity)	P 3,129,000.00
AMD-ML-110a	Brgy. Mamala, Sariaya, Quezon	One (1) set Feed Milling equipment	P 164,430.00
AMD-ML-110b	Brgy. Mamala, Sariaya, Quezon	Three (3) units Molasses Storage Tanks	42,750.00
AMD-ML-110c	Brgy. Mamala, Sariaya, Quezon	One (1) unit ACC Electric Generating Set	133,200.00

BIDDERS ARE REMINDED:

1. To inspect the properties to determine their actual condition before the bidding;
2. To submit in DBP's official bid form available at the AMD-Acquired Assets, 2nd Floor, DBP Head Office during office hours; and
3. To be on time. No bids will be accepted once unsealing of the bids commences. The sale shall be subject to other terms and conditions which may be imposed by the Bank.

DBP RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY OR ALL BIDS, TO WAIVE ANY FORMALITY THEREIN, OR TO ACCEPT SUCH BIDS AS MAY BE CONSIDERED MOST ADVANTAGEOUS TO THE BANK. THE DECISION OF THE BANK IS FINAL AND BINDING.

For inquiries, please call telephone numbers:
893-7172 or 818-9511 loc. 2218/2252 for Code starting with AMD; and
926-1686 or 818-9511 loc. 1411 for CWB and CRA

ASSET MANAGEMENT DEPARTMENT

(PDI–Feb. 4 & 5, 2004)

Republic of the Philippines
Province of Bohol
MUNICIPALITY OF SAN MIGUEL

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

Local Government Unit of San Miguel, Bohol invites all qualified bidders/suppliers to apply for eligibility and to bid on March 19, 2004 at 9:30 AM for the supply and delivery of heavy equipments as described:

1.	No. of Unit/s	1 unit only
	Equipment Type	LGP Type Bulldozer
	Operating Weight	17.14 Tons
	Type of Operator's Cabin	Open Canopy Type
	Type of Sprocket	Fixed Type
	Make	Komatsu
	Model	D60P-6
	Engine	Cummins NH220
	Rated Output	155 HP
	Condition	Slightly used, reconditioned and upgraded
2.	No. of Unit/s	1 unit only
	Type of Equipment	Wheel Type Excavator
	Type of Operator's Cabin	Close Cab
	Model	PW60-3
	Bucket Capacity	0.250 cubic meter
	Condition	Slightly Used, reconditioned, with tools, brand new tires & batteries
3.	No. of Unit/s	1 unit only
	Type of Equipment	Vibratory Compactor
	Make	Bomag or Ingersoll Rand or Dynapac
	Model	BW170 or SP48 or CA15
	Operating Weight	7 Tons
	Condition	Slightly used, reconditioned, with tools, brand new tires & batteries
4.	No. of Unit/s	2 units
	Type of Equipment	6 Wheeler Dump Truck
	Make	Isuzu or Fuso
	Model	Forward or Fighter
	Engine	6BG1 or 6D15
	Dump Box Capacity	6.0 cubic meters
	Condition	Slightly used, reconditioned and upgraded, with tools, brand new tires & batteries
	Tire Size	Over Size (8.25 x 20)
	Note	2 dump trucks must be the same make/model

Interested parties shall submit all bid documents not later than 10:00 A.M. on/or before March 04, 2004 for the pre-qualification. Bid forms are available at the Office of the Municipal Engineer or Municipal Treasurer, Municipality of San Miguel, Bohol, Telefax No. 520-3016.

The BAC reserves the right to reject any or all bids, or parts thereof, waive any defects or formality in the proposal received and to accept such bid most advantageous to the government.

(Sgd.) **TRINIDAD R. MILLARE**
BAC-Chairman
LGU-San Miguel

(PDI – February 5 & 12, 2004)

PNOC EXPLORATION CORPORATION
Building 1, Energy Center, Merritt Road,
Fort Bonifacio, Taguig, Metro Manila
Telephone Nos. 893-6001 to 47 local 2101-2104
Direct Line: 840-2024 / Fax No.: (632) 840-1459

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR PRE-QUALIFICATION AND TO BID

PNOC Exploration Corporation (PNOC EC) invites interested contractors to apply for pre-qualification and submit sealed bids for the project:

SECURITY SERVICES FOR PNOC EC NAGA COAL TERMINAL CCT07-03

PNOC EC Naga Coal Terminal is located at Naga, Cebu. The approved budget for the project is PHP 1,015,680.00. The contract duration is for two (2) years.

Pre-Qualification and Bid Documents shall be available for issuance at the above address from the Contracts Assistant (c/o Mr. Carlos L. Mejias or Mr. George N. Alejandro) starting **January 29, 2004** upon payment of a non-refundable fee of PESOS: One Thousand Two Hundred (Php 1,200.00).

For contractors who are not yet pre-qualified, the deadline for the submission of all pre-qualification requirements is on **February 24, 2004, 5:00 P.M.** Only contractors who can submit all the pre-qualification requirements before the set deadline shall be allowed to participate in the bidding.

The bidding shall utilize a two (2) sealed envelope system. The first envelope shall contain the Technical Bid and the second envelope shall contain the Financial Bid. The Technical and Financial Bids shall be submitted in two (2) sets each to the Contracts Assistant not later than **3:00 p.m.** of **March 11, 2004** at the PNOC EC Conference Room loated at the above address and shall be publicly opened immediately thereafter. Late bids shall not be accepted.

For the purpose of clarifying certain issues, a Pre-bid Conference will be held on **February 26, 2004, 1:00 P.M.** at PNOC EC Naga Coal Terminal, Naga, Cebu.

PNOC EC reserves the right to reject any or all bids or parts thereof, to waive any informality therein, or to accept such bids or to award any part thereof to any bidder/s whose bid/s is/are considered most advantageous to PNOC EC.

This publication is also posted in our website at www.pnoc-ec.com.ph and in the DBM website at www.procurementservice.net.

(Sgd.) **RICARDO S. BASALLO, JR.**
Chairman
Contracts Award Committee

(PDI - Feb. 5, 2004)

TransCo
National Transmission Corporation

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID
AD NO. MMD-TRANSCO 2004-008

PD Ref. No.: PB0400203-EL0023
PR No.: GSD-03-005627

1. The **NATIONAL TRANSMISSION CORPORATION, BIDS AND AWARDS COMMITTEE (TRANSCO - BAC) - HEAD OFFICE**, invites local bidders/contractors to apply for eligibility who are:
    - a. Duly licensed Filipino citizens/sole proprietorship, or
    - b. Partnerships duly organized under the laws of the Philippines and of which at least sixty percent (60%) of the interest belongs to citizens of the Philippines, or
    - c. Corporations duly organized under the laws of the Philippines, and of which at least sixty percent (60%) of the outstanding capital stock belongs to citizens of the Philippines, or
    - d. Manufacturers, suppliers and/or distributors forming themselves into a joint venture, i.e., group of two (2) or more manufacturers, suppliers and/or distributors that intend to be jointly and severally responsible or liable for a particular contract: Provided, however, That Filipino ownership or interest of the joint venture concerned shall be at least sixty percent (60%); or
    - e. Cooperative duly registered with the Cooperatives Development Authority (CDA).
2. Procurement of:
   SUPPLY AND DELIVERY OF SIX (6) UNITS FOUR (4) DOOR CAR SEDAN 1.6 Liters, Automatic Transmission 2004 Model
3. The contract to be performed by the successful bidder shall be specified in the attached Technical Quotation Form of the Bid Documents.
   The Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC) to be Bid is P4,800,000.00 to be sourced from the Internal Cash Generation of TransCo.
4. The Bid Documents will be available for issuance starting **February 5, 2004 to March 1, 2004** at The BAC Secretariat Office, National Transmission Corporation, Materials Management Division (MMD), Ground Floor, TransCo Main Bldg., Power Center, Quezon Avenue corner BIR Road, Diliman, Quezon City upon payment of non-refundable fee of Five Hundred Pesos (P500.00) per set.
5. Pre-Bid Conference will be held on **February 19, 2004** at 10:00 a.m. at the Admin Conference Room, G/F TransCo Main Bldg., Power Center, Quezon Avenue corner BIR Road, Diliman, Quezon City
6. Deadline for submission, receipt and opening of bids shall be on or before 10:00 a.m. of **March 02, 2004** at the Admin Conference Room, Ground Floor, TransCo Main Bldg., Power Center, Quezon Avenue corner BIR Road, Diliman, Quezon City. If the date falls on a non-working day or declared non-working day, the deadline for submission shall be moved to the next working day immediately following said date. Late submission and/or incomplete application shall not be accepted.
7. All particulars relative to the eligibility, bidding, evaluation of bids and award of contract shall be governed by the Implementing Rules and Regulations-A of Republic Act 9184.
8. TransCo reserves the right to reject any Application for Eligibility or all bids without offering any reasons, waive any required formality therein, and to make an award to the bidder whose proposal is most advantageous to the government.
9. Additional information shall be furnished upon request. All communications should be addressed to the undersigned at the aforementioned address.

(Sgd.) **ANTONIO G. LABAYANI**
Chairman, Bids and Awards Committee

(PDI - Feb. 5 & 11, 2004)

OBITUARIES

For your Classified Ads requirements, call our Classifieds Advertising Hotlines:

HEAD OFFICE	:	**897-8808 loc. 514, 516** **899-4425; 897-2535** **897-8425 (Telefax)**
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KALAW	:	**528-0213, 527-3342**
MEGAMALL	:	**635-0219, 635-0220**

ATTY. MARCELO M. LINGAO

Retired BIR Regional Director, Quezon City

Peacefully joined our Lord
on February 3, 2004 at the age of 94.

His wife **SOFIA**; daughter **DRA. GERMELINA** and family; and granddaughter, **MISSY**, request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

His remains lie in state at the family residence, 55 Santiago Street, San Francisco Del Monte, Quezon City.

Interment will be on Saturday, February 7, 2004 at the La Loma Cemetery, Caloocan City, after the 8:30 a.m. Mass at San Antonio de Padua Parish Church, Lincoln Street cor. West Riverside, San Francisco del Monte, Quezon City.

"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever
believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life." John 3:16

GLORIA FAJARDO SALAZAR

of Cabiao, NE & Jaro, Iloilo

returned to her Maker on February 2, 2004
at the age of 65.

Her loving husband **Eulalio**; children **Dr. Arlene Salazar & Albert**, **Dr. Myla Salazar & Dr. Francisco Supe**, **Randy** and **Joji Salazar**; grandchildren **Nina**, **Anya**, **Mikko & Danielle**; sisters **Evangelina**, **Amor**, **Elisa**, **Marissa Zenaida** and **Cynthia** request prayers for her eternal rest.

Her body lies at the family residence at Phase 5 Kanlaon St., Alta Tierra Village Jaro, Iloilo City.

Interment will be on Saturday, February 7, 2004 after the 8:00 a.m. Mass at Our Lady of Fatima Parish Church, Alta Tierra Village.

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OBITUARIES

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"Nais kong makapiling ang mga minamahal kong kababayan bago ako ihatid sa aking huling hantungan."

Salvador "Doy" Laurel
Enero 2004

Bilang pagsunod sa isa sa kaniyang mga huling habilin, ang mga abo ni

Dr. SALVADOR (DOY) H. LAUREL

Pangalawang Pangulo ng Pilipinas (1986–1992)

na sumakabilang-buhay noong Enero 27, 2004 sa Atherton, California, USA, ay dadalhin sa Lunsod ng Tanauan ngayon, Pebrero 5, 2004 at mananatili sa Simbahan ni San Juan Evangelista mula ika-9 hanggang ika-11:30 ng umaga. Pagkatapos ay ililipat sa Panlalawigang Kapitolyo ng Batangas, Lunsod ng Batangas at mananatili roon mula 1:30 hanggang 4:00 ng hapon at ibabalik sa Santuario de San Antonio para sa regular na pag-aalay ng Banal na Misa sa ika-7 ng gabi.

Ang mga pinuno at kasapi ng **KAPISANAN NG MGA BATANGUENO** na pinamunuan ni Doy mula 1993 hanggang sa kaniyang kamatayan ay nagluluksa at nakikiramay sa kaniyang mga naulila.

Inaanyayahan din nila ang lahat ng kanilang mga kababayan na dumalo sa Banal na Misa at sa luksang parangal para kay Doy na gaganapin sa mga nasabing lugar sa naturang petsa.

We lovingly remember
our dearly beloved

WILLIAM F. GEMPERLE

(†February 6, 1983)

on his 21st death anniversary

Holy Mass is being offered on Friday, February 6, 2004 at the following churches:

St. Alphonsus Mary de Liguori Parish	6:15 A.M., 7:00 A.M.,
Magallanes Village, Makati City	12:15 P.M. & 6:00 P.M.
Santuario de San Antonio, Forbes Park	6:15 A.M., 7:30 A.M.,
	12:15 P.M. & 6:00 P.M.
St. John Bosco Parish, Makati City	7:30 A.M. & 12:15 P.M.
Sto. Niño de Paz Chapel, Greenbelt, Makati City	7:15 A.M. & 12:15 P.M.
St. Joseph Parish, Tambo, Parañaque	6:00 A.M.
St. Joseph Parish (Bamboo Organ), Las Piñas	6:00 A.M.
St. Andrew Parish, La Huerta, Parañaque	6:15 A.M.,
Shrine of Jesus, the Way, the Truth and the Life, Pope John Paul II Youth Center	6:00 A.M. & 5:30 P.M.
Our Lady of Sorrows Church, F.B. Harrison, Pasay City	7:00 A.M.
Our Lady of Remedies, Malate Church	5:00 P.M.
Nuestra Señora de Guia, Ermita Church	8:00 A.M.
St. Jerome & St. Susana Parish	6:00 A.M.,
Ayala Alabang	12:15 P.M. & 6:00 P.M.
St. James Parish, Ayala Alabang	6:20 A.M. & 6:30 P.M.
Presentation of the Child Jesus Parish	6:00 A.M.,
BF Homes, Parañaque City	6:45 A.M. & 7:00 P.M.
Parish Church of the Resurrection	5:30 A.M.,
BF Homes, Parañaque	6:30 A.M. & 6:30 P.M.

The family thanks friends, relatives and readers for remembering him in prayer.

Esperanza Asuncion Grunden Vda.de Farolan

Peacefully went home to the Lord on February 4, 2004 at the age of 82

Her bereaved children **Eva and Boy Peñamora, Sally and Totie Gonzalez, Bit Farolan**; grandchildren **Myk and Rachele, Charles, Jefp, Venise, and Sky**; great grandchild **Joshua**; nephews and nieces other relatives and friends request the pious reader to pray for the eternal repose of her soul.

Her remains lie in state at Chapel A-1 Funeraria Paz,
Araneta Avenue, Quezon City
Interment will be on Sunday, February 8, 2004
at Loyola Memorial Park in Marikina
after the 9:00 a.m. Holy Mass

ANTONIO DAYRIT Y DIZON SR.

September 3, 1933 - February 2, 2004

His bereaved wife **Lily Castillo**; children **Bart** and **Elvie**, **Jun** and **Mabel**, **Cristina**, **Fran** and **Emma**, **Baby** and **Adjie**; grandchildren **Tim** and **RB**, **Simon** and **Juno**, **Vina** and **Paya**, **Kelly**, **Kenneth** and **Kevin**, **Katrina**, **Michael** and **Kamille**; sister and brother-in-law **Mameng** and **Jun Rodriguez** and other relatives and friends request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

His remains lie in state at the Mortuary of Sacred Heart Parish Church, Scout Ybardolaza St., Kamuning, Quezon City.

Interment will be today, February 5, 2004 at the Laloma Cemetery after the 8:00 a.m. Mass.

> **"For God so loved the world, that He gave us His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life."** — John 3:16

An obituary with a picture can be a fitting tribute to your departed loved one.

Always caring...

INQUIRER OBITUARIES

OBITUARY REQUIREMENTS:

❶ Copy of Death Certificate

❷ Any identification document (I.D.)

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Operation Diabetes fights off rapid spread of this disease

ALING Mina lacks enough insulin to break down the sugar in her blood. So she breaks into sweat instead. What she lacks inside her body she makes up with every arm-swaying and hip-swinging move. A member of a diabetic club called Sun Valley Sweetness in Paranaque City, Aling Mina does regular aerobics with her peers to keep her blood sugar down. Keeping fit is more enjoyable now, she admits. The club, a support group of diabetics, motivates her and people like her in the neighborhood to appreciate the merits of a fit body and right diet. Elsewhere, more Aling Minas are learning that too much sweet and fatty foods and loathe of physical activity can result in complications in the eyes, nerve, heart, kidneys and limbs. Thanks to Operation: Diabetes, a private program that aims to combat the spread of diabetes in the country.

Sun Valley Sweetness is just one of the many diabetic clubs participating under Operation Diabetes, a nationwide program that puts in mind communities with weak or no diabetes programs. The program runs a gamut of campaigns to educate people on diabetes, seek out the diabetics among them and train health professionals on appropriate diabetes prevention and management. It also builds the structure where the community, assisted by the municipal or city doctor, is empowered to run their diabetic club. Operation Diabetes also motivates diabetics to to encourage each other to cut down on sweets and fats and add up on exercise.

In the country, it is believed that there are about 6-7 million Filipinos who are diabetic, many may not have known that they have the disease. The problem gets worse with the devolution of health services to local governments, with only a meager budget needed to stem the tide on diabetes. The solution? Harness the private sector's financial and logistics strength and the public doctors' medical expertise.

Operation Diabetes was launched two years ago by the Association of Municipal Health Officers of the Philippines (Amhop), the organization that runs the network of municipal health centers, and its partner Herbcare Corporation, maker of Charantia Ampalaya Food Supplement. Under a transparent partnership, Herbcare builds up the program's financial backbone while Amhop officially endorses the Charantia brand. Amhop doctors have since been recommending the company's food supplement to fortify their patients' low-fat, high-fiber diet. Over time, these doctors' clinical experience has shown that their patients were able to keep their blood sugar at safe levels. But beyond the value of the product, Amhop appreciates more the efforts of the company in keeping its commitment to help diabetics.

The program also offers two parallel activities to further boost the fight against diabetes. The club members are given free leadership and team-building workshops. Sponsored diabetes lectures, free newsletters, identification cards, snacks (when appropriate) and event banners are likewise extended to the clubs.

On the other hand, the program helps health professionals gain the know-how in appropriate diabetes care and prevention. It organizes them into diabetes teams of doctor, nutritionist and nurse or midwife, the better to extend diabetes care to patients. For the past two years, the program has been sending diabetes experts to train Amhop doctors on proper diabetes prevention and management. The same training earns continuing medical education units for the participants. Operation Diabetes has also partnered with the Leaders for Health Foundation, Inc. (LHFI), a nonprofit organization of health professionals affiliated with the Department of Health.

Operation Diabetes is steadily gaining inroads. More significantly, Operation Diabetes empowers community residents to take the responsibility in helping themselves.

For information on Operation Diabetes, you may call the Secretariat at 802-2222.

BPI CERTIFIED IN INTEGRATED MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

The Bank of the Philippine Islands (BPI) recently secured an integrated certification of ISO 9001:2000 (Quality Management) and BS 7799 (Information Security Management System), the first bank in the Philippines to be certified in an integrated management system. The ISO certification covers BPI's various products and services. Photo shows (from left) Richard Quin of TUV Product Service; Dr. Michael Schlect, product manager (BS 7799 and ISO 14001) of TUV Management Service; Dr. Hugo Atzmuller, product manager of TUV Management Service; Ramoncito Puyat of TUV Product Services; Jaime Agusto Zobel de Ayala, BPI vice-chair; Xavier Loinaz, BPI president; Aurelio Montinola III, BPI senior executive vice president; and Varian Ojeda of TUV Product Service.

Infiltrate Treatment offers solution to dry hair with right 'PH'

THERE has been a lot of awareness created recently about "pH" properties of various parts of the body, with the emergence of feminine wash products. PH is the "Power Hydrogen" ion which is the comparative measurement between the acidity and the alkalinity of the substance. The principle it adheres to is quite simple: To attain the right protection, the product should only have the right pH level.

Tony Galvez, the country's top hair guru, declared that hair as well needs to be washed with the right pH 5.0, no more, no less.

Wrong choice of products because of high pH value can damage the overall health of the hair. Recent hair care trends also cause further drying and damage of hair.

Fortunately, Tony Galvez has discovered a "clinical" solution to this problem, with a product that promises to restore normal condition of hair because it uses the right pH level of 5.0.

Infiltrate Treatment pH 5.0 can help restore and repair broken hair cuticle into a stronger condition. It also maintains the natural acid state of the entire hair, and protects hair fibers against chemicals, mechanical heat, and physical stress. It prevents and eliminates excessive dryness and stubborn coarseness of the hair cuticle, while enhancing the health and beauty of one's crowning glory.

Hair Chemistry states that shampoo and hair care products in the market don't indicate in their labels about their pH levels so consumers don't have an idea what it can do to their hair. PH levels above 5.0 contain alkaline, which can cause the acid mantle to breakdown, resulting in damaged conditions which cannot live in such a highly alkaline state. Below pH 5.0 meanshile means too corrosive and acidic for the hair. Local shampoo products normally contain an average of pH 7 to 8, which is too strong for the hair, further making it dy.

Like the normal body temperature of 37.5 degrees Celsius, having a temperature above this describes sickness, so this charaterizes how hair becomes if exposed to above normal levels of pH.

One month of usage of infiltrate Treatment pH 5.0 will immediately restore pH levels to your hair. It is very simple and quick to use. After shampooing, get enough amount of infiltrate Treatment on your palm and dab it on the center portion of your hair. Slide down your fingers over the entire hair down to the ends. Comb your hair to style.

Tony Galvez also recommends Infiltrate Shampoo pH 5.0 to guarantee maximum and faster results. This will enhance the health and beauty of your hair to become smoother, softer and healthier.

For inquiries, contact Perfect Solution Trading at the Tony Galvez Centrum, 124 9th Avenue, N. Cor. P. Tuazon Blvd., Araneta Center, Cubao Quezon City, or at telephone numbers 913-4370 or 913-3953; e-mail tgalvez@skyinet.net or visit the website www.tonygalvez.com.ph

Pami breathes new life to GMFI

YEAR 2003 ended on a high note for the GSIS "Kinabukasan" Mutual Fund Inc (GMFI). A perennial cellar dweller among 10 balanced mutual funds being offered to the public, it has managed to land in 4th place due to a masterful turn-around on performance maneuvered by its new fund manager - Philam Asset Management Inc (Pami).

It could still be recalled that State owned GSIS made a strategic decision in May of 2003 to acquire the asset management services of the most dynamic fund management company in the Philippines (Pami) to rehabilitate its failing mutual fund - (GMFI).

That decision in May proved valuable for Pami confirmed its worth as a formidable strength in 3rd party asset management by breathing new life to the GSIS "Kinabukasan" Mutual Fund. After 3 years (2000-2002) of negative performance the GMFI came out with a positive 18.69 percent yield from the time Pami stood as its fund manager in May until December 2003. This reversal is what mainly contributed to the positive 23.14 percent annual yield that GMFI posted for 2003.

For 2004, PamI has its target set at increasing GMFI's assets under management by 1 Billion pesos and will continue overseeing the investment portfolio of the "Kinabukasan" Fund. Pami still remains firm in its commitment to bring the tradition of active fund management and better yields to the GMFI.

Bits Clips

26th Admu Service Awards

ON FEB. 5 the Ateneo de Manila honors and thanks its University Service Awardees at the Ateneo High School Covered Courts, 3 to 5 p.m., Loyola Heights, Quezon City. The University Service Awards are given to employees (faculty, administration, nonteaching personnel) who have served the university for 5, 10, 15, 20, 25 and more years.

JOB reunion-meeting

All former members of Junior Operation Brotherhood (JOB) are invited to a reunion-meeting on Saturday, Feb. 7, 3:30 p.m. at the residence of Hondo and Ana Sy-Quia on 8337 Maharlika Ave., Marcelo Green Village, La Huerta, Paranaque. Members are requested to get in touch with organizers: Daisy Barawidan Lizaso (897-5941; 0917-521-0430) or Ana Quintos Sy-Quia (823-5373/74; 0917-534-8753).

Olas holds Alumni GA

THE OUR Lady of the Angels (Franciscan) Seminary will hold its First Alumni General Assembly on Feb. 7, from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. at the Olas Auditorium. The assembly aims to lay the foundations for the institution of the Olas Alumni Association. All former students and seminarians of Olas are invited to attend. For details, contact Val San Pascual at 896-06-07 or Rev. Fr. Long Gutay, OFM at 936-40-83.

Figaro Coffee Club Farm Tour 2004 underway

FIGARO, a name which has become synonymous with the best in specialty coffee, offers an enriching day to truly experience the subtle nuances that define and help create a flavorsome cup of coffee – through the 6th Figaro Farm Tour that will take participants to the towns of Amadeo and Tagaytay on Feb. 7. Dubbed "Going Organic," the farm tour reflects that Figaro is just as dedicated to the changing needs and tastes of consumers and the environment, as it is to making great coffee. Interested individuals may inquire about registration at any of the Figaro coffee outlets, or directly register by e-mailing Zarah Perez at zarahperez@figarocoffee.com. A copy of the registration form may be downloaded from www.savethebarako.org. Figaro Coffee Club members are entitled to a discount on registration fees. For further inquiries, contact the Figaro Foundation at 813-5836.

Atpa holds homecoming

The Association of Thomasian Psychology Alumni (ATPA), composed of B.S. Psychology degree holders of the University of Santo Tomas, will be holding its first Alumni Homecoming dubbed as "Tabula Rasa". The event will be held at the UST Thomas Aquinas Research Complex on February 7, 5pm. For further inquiries, interested parties may call Roann Ramos at 09194901505 or through the UST Department of Psychology at 7313101 local 8325 and Monette Cruz at 09178266240 or 7313101 local 8393.

FPI's 2nd golf tourney

THE FEDERATION of Philippine Industries is inviting all golf enthusiasts, members as well as nonmembers to participate in its Second Golf Tournament which will be held at the Tagaytay Midlands Golf Course on Feb. 26. The format for the tournament will be system 36, with class A, B, C. Tee-off time will be at 8 a.m. Joining for the tournament is P2,800 per player, and P1500 for members of either TagaytayHighlands or Midlands. Non-players/spectators can still participate in the raffle and lunch for only P800. This year, FPI is instituting a separate Ladies' Division for its tournament. An early bird discount of P500 awaits early registrants until Feb. 7. Registration forms are available at the FPI Secretariat, look for Miss Tina Manahan. For more details and information, please call 8440324.

ProductFILES

Nattural Quality Corp's Ampalaya Plus

NATTURAL Quality Corp, a wholly owned Filipino corporation, which is into the manufacturing and distribution of herbal supplements, launched recently its very own food supplement brand Ampalaya Plus. Ampalaya Plus is a unique combination of three native medicinal plants - ampalaya, banaba and luyang dilaw. Ampalaya is commonly regarded to contain blood sugar lowering active components that fight diabetes, and boost the immune system. Banaba, a popular herbal tea, has corosolic acid, which is also used in many treatments for diabetes, and a potent weight-loss supplement. On the other hand, luyang dilaw, a familiar key spice in curry dishes, has a strong anti-inflammatory and anti-oxidant, which helps repair damage in body cells. All raw materials for Ampalaya Plus are scientifically fingerprinted, ensuring consistency in quality, and user benefits. Each capsule holds the highest dosage at 550 mg., and lowest price at P6 compared with other brands. Apart from effectively controlling increase in blood sugar, clinical studies indicate that Ampalaya Plus brings about better bowel movement, reverses aging, eliminates toxins through the liver, and lowers blood pressure and cholesterol level.

Zwitsal for your pride and joy

BEING a mom means you have to make a hundred choices for your baby each day. This means fussing over meals, naps, baths, and other overwhelming decisions. It's a good thing Zwitsal Hypo-Allergenic baby products are there to make baby care a breeze. The top-to-toe line includes the no-tears, non-drying skin formula Baby Bath, that makes cleaning your bundle of joy fun and worry-free. Lather her hair with the Baby Shampoo that won't sting her eyes. The Baby Powder soothes your baby's skin. The low-alcohol Baby Cologne does not dry baby's sensitive skin. The Lite Baby Lotion makes your baby's skin soft and supple. Now, you can choose from two Zwitsal scents: the classic white and the new blue scent. The Zwitsal Hypo-Allergenic Baby Product Line is available at Sara Lee Direct Selling Philippines and authorized Sara Lee dealers nationwide. For inquiries, call their Hotline at 810-5402.

DAGUPAN CITY AWARDS TO JOE DATUIN

Mayor Benjamin Lim (middle) presents the 'Outstanding Overseas Dagupeño Award' to Joe Datuin for his contribution in promoting the interest of Dagupeño in Filipino Art. He also received a plaque of City Council resolution No. 407-2003, congratulating him for being one of the recipients of the 1st Gawad President Manuel L. Quezon Award 2003 (Arts and Culture). Standing far left is Councilor B. Fernandez also the Hermano Mayor of Pawil Dagupan-City Fiesta 2003. The awards were given last Dec. 30 at the Dagupan City Plaza.

PTAA's TravelTour Expo

THE TRAVEL and tourism industry is all agog over the staging of the Philippine Travel Agencies Association's annual travel trade show – the 11th TravelTour Expo, which will formally open on Feb. 6, at the Megatrade Halls of SM Megamall Building B, Mandaluyong City. It will run until Feb. 8. For inquiries about TravelTour Expo 2004, kindly call up the Philippine Travel Agencies Association at 552-0026 to 29.

New operations manager of Caliraya Re-Creation

FREDERIC Tan Ching was recently promoted to operations manager of Caliraya Re-Creation Center, the first Family/Christian resort in Asia. The resort is a 7.6 hectare property perched on a mountain shoulder overlooking the famous Caliraya Lake in Lumban Laguna. The Caliraya Re-Creation Center is owned and managed by ASB Development Corporation. Ching brings with him 8 years of experience in hotel operations. Prior to his new assignment, he was the front office manager of the resort.

Umed holds HPN confab

UNITED Laboratories (Unilab), through its learning resource arm, Unilab Medical Education and Development (Umed), is conducting state-of-the-art conferences on heart failure and hypertension (HPN) on Feb. 2 and 8, 7 a.m. at Edsa Shangri-La Hotel. Cardiologists, internists and general practitioners with cardiology practice are invited to attend. Umed's co-sponsors are the Philippine Heart Association, Philippine Society of Hypertension, Philippine Lipid Society and Heart Failure Society of the Philippines in celebration of Heart Month.

WWII Veterans meeting

THE ANNUAL meeting of the World War II Veterans Legionnaires of the Phils Inc will be held on Feb. 7, 10 a.m., at 215 Military Road, Bgy. Holy Spirit, Diliman QC for the election of the board of trustees and officers of the association for the years 2004 to 2005 pursuant to its by-laws. For inquiries call tel. no. 430-6975 or lawyer Greg Bayato at tel no. 339-0616.

16th JS Tengco Golf Classic

THE JST Golf Classic, an annual celebration of the game now on its 16th year, unfolds at the Camp John Hay Golf Club this Feb. 5 to 6. Welcome cocktails, registration and pairing of flights will be held starting 5:30 p.m. at the Veranda of Camp John Hay Golf Club, followed by cocktails and open bar at 5:30 p.m. Teeoff from Hole 1 and 10 start at 8 a.m. on Feb. 6, followed by lunch at 12 noon. Awards and fellowship come next at 6 p.m. at the Baguio Country Club poolside, with a prize raffle spicing up the occasion. For more information, JST Golf Classic contenders are invited to call Mel at 411-2720 in Manila and Ofie at (044)766-2574 in Baliuag.

Southborder Valentine concert at SBMA Subic

GET ready to be in love as Southborder hits subic with their Valentine concert dubbed as "Totally Inlove with Southborder" on Feb. 13 at the Softball Field of SBMA Subic, Zambales with special guest Toni Gonzaga. This event is presented to you by Manels Total Department Store and RRJ in cooperation with manels, inquirer's on the road, strepsils and 90.7 Love radio.

People, Events & Products

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aespinosa@inquirer.com.ph

Editor **Aries Espinosa**

Inquirer awards top sales, marketing performers

CLASSIFIED'S Donald Lim's leadership is recognized

ADVERTISING VP Pepito Olarte receives his award for leading the display team. With him are SVP for sales and marketing Rene Reinoso, president Sandy R. Prieto, SVP for corporate services Dave O. Valdes, and VP for finance Jun Ymson.

SANDY ROMUALDEZ: 'Despite tough times, our people still performed beyond expectations.'

IT WAS a "return of the kings" affair, sort of, for the Philippine Daily Inquirer's sales and marketing departments when the Sales and Marketing Awards at the plush MyCinema in Greenbelt 3, Makati City Jan. 15.

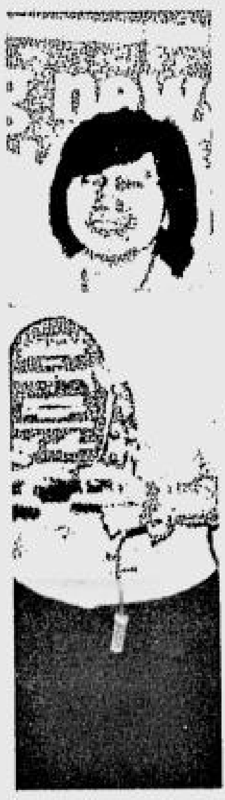
Just like last year, the groups were treated to a screening of the highly acclaimed "Lord of the Rings" trilogy, this time with the final installment "The Return of the King".

With corporate HR training head Chito San Mateo as master of ceremonies, individuals who displayed exemplary performance towards the unprecedented growth of the organization in 2003 were announced.

The awardees this year are:

Circulation's Most Outstanding Fieldman—Resty Lee; Exemplary Leadership for Circulation—Gloria Lardizabal; Exemplary Leadership for Display Advertising—Pepito Olarte; Top Sales and Consistency Award for Supplements—Magella Pinili and Lita Pascual; Top sales and consistency award for Other Products—Grace Penales, Magella Pinili and Elena delos Reyes; Top sales and consistency award for Inquirer Libre: Izelle Medina; For consistently hitting monthly sales targets—Mylene de Jesus (2nd) and Lita Pascual and Magella Pinili (1st); Top sales award--Grace Penales (3rd), Magella Pinili (2nd) and Elena delos Reyes (1st); Exemplary leadership for classifieds—Donald Lim; Sales office assistant of the year—Randy Isaac of Megamall (3rd), Jhonna Navallo of Main (2nd), and Cristina Asuncion of Atrium (1st); Account Executive of the year—Arnold Gatdula of Megamall (3rd), Veronica Fernandez of Main (2nd), and Liberty Lalicon of Atrium (1st): Branch manager of the year—Aileen Garcia of Cubao (3rd), Liwayway Tabaranza of Main (2nd), and Imelda Limbo of Atrium (1st); Production Specialist of the year—Gemma Villapando; Production Assistant of the year—Joel Macawile: Most Outstanding Sales Performance—Nanette Abad and Adela Mendoza

LITA Pascual



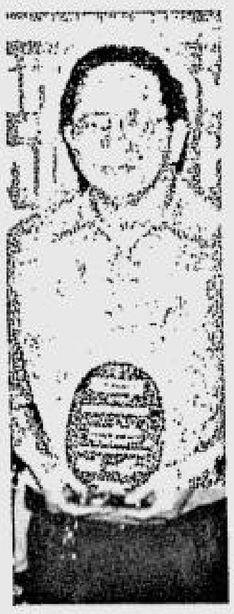
MAGELLA Pinili

MYLENE de Jesus

ELENA de los Reyes

IZELLE Medina

GRACE Penales



RESTY Lee

GEMMA Villapando

NANETTE Abad

CRISTINA Asuncion

BENG Fernandez

ARNOLD Gatdula

RANDY Isaac

JOEL Macawile

LIWAYWAY Tabaranza

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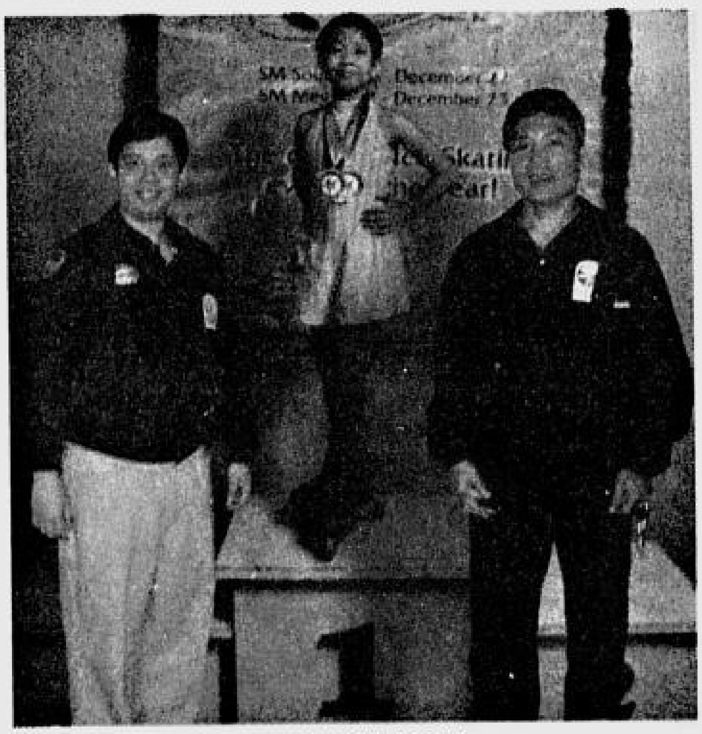
LBC AND FUJI BRING SMILES ACROSS THE COUNTRY

Hari ng Padala, LBC Express Inc, the country's first and largest courier has teamed up with Fujifilm Philippines to establish the first door-to-door photo delivery service in the country. Dubbed as 'Photo Padala Service', the pioneering venture gives consumers the option to have their photos developed high quality and delivered straight to their doorsteps. They could even choose to have the developed pictures delivered to another person, anywhere in the country. This highly innovative service is made possible via the nationwide network of LBC Express with the extensive support of its ICT arm W Network, Inc. With LBC's Photo Padala Service now in place, quality photo developing need not ruin your day's busy schedule. Just present the roll of film (any type or brand) you want developed to any LBC Express branch and have them printed and delivered to any destination of your choice anywhere in the Philippines.



ALARICE MAIA GO, THE MEDALIST

Alarice (center) experienced her first Ice Skating 6 months ago in Hong Kong Glacier Festival Walk and City Plaza Ice Palace, Then she went on to have her first formal skating lesson at SM Ice Skating Rink, in SM Megamall under coach Orlan 5 months ago. Later on coach Carlo Manuel Gonzalez (left), a former medalist of the Institution taught Alarice, and also SM Ice Skating head coach, Ricardo 'Eric' Navalta (right). On Dec. 22 and 23, 2003, Alarice joined 3 events at SM Ice Skating Manila 2003 under the program prepared by coach Eric and coach Carlo, Alarice won medals in all the 3 events. Head coach Eric said, Alarice, being a first timer to join this kind of competition and won these medals, will have a very bright future in Ice Skating, and as long as she will continues practicing and maintain her humble attitude, she will be an international skating star in the near future

RP roads need the likes of Smart cars and fast

By Charles E. Buban

FANCY-LOOKING Smart car packs a lot of serious stuffs within.

ANYONE who drives to work in one of the country's urban centers knows that road traffic congestion is getting worse.

Average travel speed drops to almost standstill during rush hours despite reroutings, use of alternate routes and yellow lanes, and imposition of the number-coding scheme.

Meanwhile, these vehicles caught in chronic traffic jams waste huge amounts of fuel as well as emit enormous quantities of fumes that add to the already choked metropolis air.

The traditional solution has been to construct more and larger road networks, but as to where (few spaces are left to build on) and how (investors are more careful these days) pose a big challenge for the country's transportation planners.

Efficient use of public roads

It seems the best solution at the moment is for the country to look for a more efficient use of its existing road network.

There are suggestions of introducing small vehicles that can maximize the country's roads and limited parking spaces—much like the petite multicabs that is so popular in provincial urban centers throughout the country.

The idea is to unclutter out road networks yet still provide quality ride for its commuters.

Then last December, CATS Motors Inc. and Mercedes-Benz finally brought to this country another type of petite vehicles that has been causing a stir in Europe since its introduction three years ago.

Produced by DaimlerChrysler's subsidiary Micro Compact Car Smart of Germany, the Smart car was conceived by its manufacturer as the ultimate niche vehicle for urban dwellers, who require "short haul individual mobility."

Two seater

The Smart car is a two-seater gasoline subcompact car powered by a 599 cc, three cylinder Suprex turbocharged engine.

Weighing only 750 kg, the Smart car is almost as wide (1.5 m) as it is long (2.5 m), making it easier to find a parking spot along congested city streets.

"What we have introduced to this market is the Smart Fourtwo coupe and the Smart Roadster," informed Charlon Alcala of CATS Motors.

And you will not miss these pug-nosed two seaters on the road especially with their weird bubble-like styling, glass roof, and fancy instruments inside.

Radical concept

In justifying its radical concept, DaimlerChrysler notes that in Western Europe—where this vehicle was first marketed—75 percent of the population live in the city center area and most trips are less than 40 km, with an average of only 1.2 occupants.

The Smart car concept might be the best option we have at the moment. It achieves a fuel consumption rate of 4.8 liters per 100 kilometers and is equipped with an electronic power management that prevents the engine from emitting pollutants.

Its maximum speed is 135 kilometers per hour and speeds up from standstill to 60 kph in 7 seconds.

Protection from collision

Although the Smart car looks more like an oversized toy car, its designers were dead serious in protecting its occupants from collision.

In fact, it has been designed with the same levels of collision protection as the Mercedes-Benz A Class.

Onboard safety equipment includes airbags for both the driver and passenger, integral safety seats, ABS brakes, Trust-Plus (electronic traction and stability control), Tridion safety cell, and inertia seatbelts with force limiters.

Alcala also revealed that the Smart car is designed to be environment friendly: at the end of its days it is nearly 100 percent recyclable.

Although the Smart Fourtwo coupè and the Smart Roadster are still priced slightly above what an average Filipino car buyer can acquire these days (priced P1.090 million and P1.690 million, respectively), its manufacturers are confident that the Smart car is "an innovative mobility concept which is needed now more than ever."

Toyota Previa: chic and classy

ON THE ROAD

Aida Sevilla-Mendoza

IF YOU believe that 8 is a lucky number, then the Toyota Previa is the minivan for you. The Previa has 8 air-con vents (four in front, four in the back), 8 cupholders, 8 map lamps and if one passenger is a child, it comfortably seats 8 including the driver.

Launched in Manila last November as a CBU (completely built unit) from Japan, the Previa is known as the Estima in its country of origin and is also sold in Singapore, Taiwan and Brunei. The Previa used to be sold in the United States but has been replaced there by the Sienna.

By pricing the Previa at P1,680,000—half a million pesos more than the gasoline-fed Mitsubishi Space Gear, P385,000 more than the Chevrolet Venture and P381,000 more than the automatic Nissan Serena—Toyota Motor Philippines Corp. is obviously targeting the upper bracket of the minivan market. The Previa is for motoring families who want and can afford more style, more luxury and more class than what the other brands, particularly the Kia and Hyundai boxes, have to offer. The only other minivan that could give the Previa a run for its money is the Honda Odyssey or Honda Stream, neither of which is sold here.

Stratospheric

Is the Previa worth its stratospheric price? Equipped with a 2.4-liter, 4-cylinder in-line, 16-valve DOHC, VVT-i (Variable Valve Timing with intelligence) engine capable of 157 max horsepower at 5,700 rpm and 225 Nm/4,000 rpm max torque, the Previa is more fuel-efficient than the 3.0-liter, 6-cylinder Chevy Venture. Although its engine is smaller than the Venture's, the Previa's hauling power is more than adequate, pulling smoothly through the full rev range with its 4-speed automatic tranny enhanced by Toyota's Super ECT (electronically controlled transmission).

You can never confuse the Previa with other minivans because its futuristic-looking, sloping façade with multireflector headlamps, sleek exterior, wide expanse of glass and the full-width backdoor garnish connecting its taillights plus rear spoiler set it apart from the rest. Inside, the Previa has not only two, but four ultra-comfortable captain seats with armrests. All four captain seats and the foldable bench seat in the rear, which has a center armrest, can be pushed forward and reclined to create more cargo space. Just as convenient as the versatility of the seating configuration are the two sliding doors that lock automatically when fully opened and then automatically slide shut again when the unlocking device inside the door is pressed. Because of the sliding doors, its roominess, flexible seating, four captain seats and the low ground clearance, the Previa is ideal for those with a disabled family member who enjoys motoring out of town with kith and kin on weekends and holidays.

Refined

One word can sum up the Previa's ride and handling: refined. When I sped up to over 100 km/hr on the Skyway, the steering became firmer and weightier, reassuring me and my passengers that this is a solidly built, high-quality motor vehicle that will stay the course. MacPherson struts up front with L-shaped lower arm and stabilizer and a torsion beam rear suspension with coil spring shock absorber and stabilizer guarantee a smooth, comfortable car-like ride. Even when moving forward at high speed, the Previa remained calm and quiet, generating very little wind noise despite its size.

In tune with the ergonomic trend these days, the Previa's gauges are mounted in the center of the dash together with the Fujitsu Ten single CD/cassette/tuner that has six speakers strategically situated front and rear. Wood grain trim gives the steering wheel, front doors and gear shifter a luxe touch. A power outlet is available in the rear for a laptop or mobile phone and the double-layer air-conditioning system front and rear has automatic climate control.

The Previa is fully equipped for safety with two airbags in front, ABS (antilock braking system) and four disc brakes, 3 pt. ELR seatbelts all around, impact beams in the side doors, a high-mount third stop lamp, front fog lamps and engine immobilizer. A clearance and back sonar facilitate parking maneuvers. Bottom line, the Previa is a chic minivan that gives value for money since not only is it eminently capable of fulfilling the multipurposes for which it was created, it also gives you a touch of class.

* * *

TODAY'S BUMPER STICKER: Obsession is the word lazy people give to those of us who are motivated.

* * *

(E-mail comments to asevilla@inquirer.com.ph.)

PREVIA

New RAV4: Perfection, just got an upgrade

TOYOTA is known to turn unbelievable concepts into logical evolutions, and then to perfection. The remodeled Toyota RAV4 is the prime effect of this sweeping cause.

Early in 1996, Toyota revolutionized the bland design of the compact SUV when it introduced the first pint-sized sport utility vehicle. The RAV4 instantly became the favorite of a market that defined their lifestyle by what they drive.

Since then Toyota has been perfecting the RAV4 through constant upgrades to satisfy the demands of an independent and stable, yet self-pampering generation. Toyota's new RAV4 enters 2004 with the most distinct feature of perfection: an attitude to go with its driver's standards.

No wallflower

The RAV4's new eye-catching front exterior ensures this compact SUV is no wallflower. The radical design of the front grille and the color-keyed bumper exude an air of handsome toughness or chic poise for those who work hard during the weekdays, but crave for a different level of excitement during weekends.

Adding up to this head-turning features are well-designed multireflector halogen lamp and the large front and rear fog lamps that make it usable and reliable for nighttime driving. For the Toyota RAV4, pretty face and smart design definitely go together.

THE NEW Rav4

The RAV4's interior is accented with a two-tone black and grey color scheme that matches the vehicle's robust interior. Lean back into its sporty bucket full moquette seats and relax with a commanding driving stance to relish clear views all around, thanks to vertical height adjustments in the front seats. The new sporty white-faced, silver-lined meter gauges provide less distraction and better visibility for the driver.

Learn to have fun with two-hour traffic jam with the RAV4's audio system with four adrenaline-pumping speakers. And considering the exterior dimensions, the RAV4's roomy interior can fit four adults comfortably inside, and has enough space for cargo.

High-performance engine

This small SUV delivers convenience for its owner's forceful, vigorous lifestyle. The newly remodeled sports package of the all-wheel-drive RAV4 is powered by a 1AZ-FE 2.0-liter Double Overhead Camshaft (DOHC) electronically fuel injected (EFI) engine with Toyota's vaunted Variable Valve Timing with Intelligence (VVT-i) system. This new generation engine provides a balanced performance that combines power, smoothness, economy and clean emissions. This high-performance engine produces an abundant amount of power with the maximum output pegged at 148 hp at 6,000 rpm while boasting of a maximum torque of 192 Nm at 4,000 rpm.

Not a big truck and definitely not a small car, the RAV4 combines the best of both worlds. It delivers smoother, more submissive rides as well as more responsive steering than truck-based SUVs. It has the balance and stability of a small car but the big truck's mastery on swift corner turns, and confident sturdiness when traversing rough roads.

Distinct shades, prices

The RAV4 is enhanced in distinct shades of freedom white, surf blue, thermalyte and graphite for the RAV4 4x4 automatic transmission and raven black, thermalyte and sand dune for the RAV4 4x2 manual transmission.

Screaming "value" with a tag of P1,198,000 for the all-wheel drive with automatic transmission and P998,000 for the front-wheel drive with manual transmission, Toyota's new head-turning RAV4 is out to be claimed.

Toyota started the compact SUV revolution with the RAV4. Start your driving revolution by turning the keys. Visit the nearest authorized Toyota dealers, or log on to www.toyota.com.ph <http://www.toyota.com.ph> for more details.

Frontier: most wanted

From page B12

the driver for those crucial sweeps and turns during driving.

This renegade-looking road machine is also fitted with a unique fashion bar with third brake light; an up-to-date overfender; foglamps to light your way in those unpredictable weather situations; spray-on bedliner; chrome-finished alloy wheels and a side-step tube embossed with the Frontier logo.

Inside the Titanium flaunts convenience and style for the driver and passengers. Think about seats made up of genuine leather; door trimmings and aluminum panels that add oomph to the interior; and stereo to heed your music commands.

The Frontier Titanium is available in manual model, equipped with a TD27 diesel engine and automatic model, powered by a QD32 diesel engine.

Wheels offers February Specials promo

WHEELS Inc., a one-stop automobile shop which offers Ssang Yyong, Kia and Hyundai vehicles, makes February more exciting for its customers with its February Specials promo. For the whole month of February, Wheels customers get to take home free gifts such as leisure trip packages, appliances and personal items.

New owners of SsangYong cars can choose from the following presents depending on their preferred SsangYong model: trip to Boracay or Hong Kong for two (for two to three nights with free breakfast); a one-year membership at The Spa; or a free maintenance, parts and service.

SsangYong is a respected brand of Korean vehicles, with new models Rexto SU V and Musso/Rhino built for discriminating car lovers.

For those who choose to drive home Kia and Hyundai, appliances such as DVD player, colored TV, microwave oven, imported apparel and shoes and other perks, are out for grabs until Feb. 29.

See for yourself and get to know more of your favorite SsangYong, Kia and Hyundai models on Feb. 19, from 8 a.m. to 9 p.m. at Wheels main showroom on E. Rodriguez Sr. Avenue (near St. Luke's Hospital). Free food and drinks await the guests.

Take advantage of Wheels' 0 percent interest, low down and monthly payments, cash deals and other affordable plans on top of its February treats.

Buy 4 Yokohama High Performance Tires, and get this for FREE!

Every purchase of 4 Yokohama high performance tires entitles you to get a BEACH TOWEL for FREE!

Available in all Yokohama Tire outlets.

Promo EXTENDED until March 31, 2004. Approved by DTI-NCR

Get any of these Yokohama High Performance Tire models: AVS dB V550, AVS Sport V102, AVS S/T V801, AVS ES100, A539 and ADVAN Neova.

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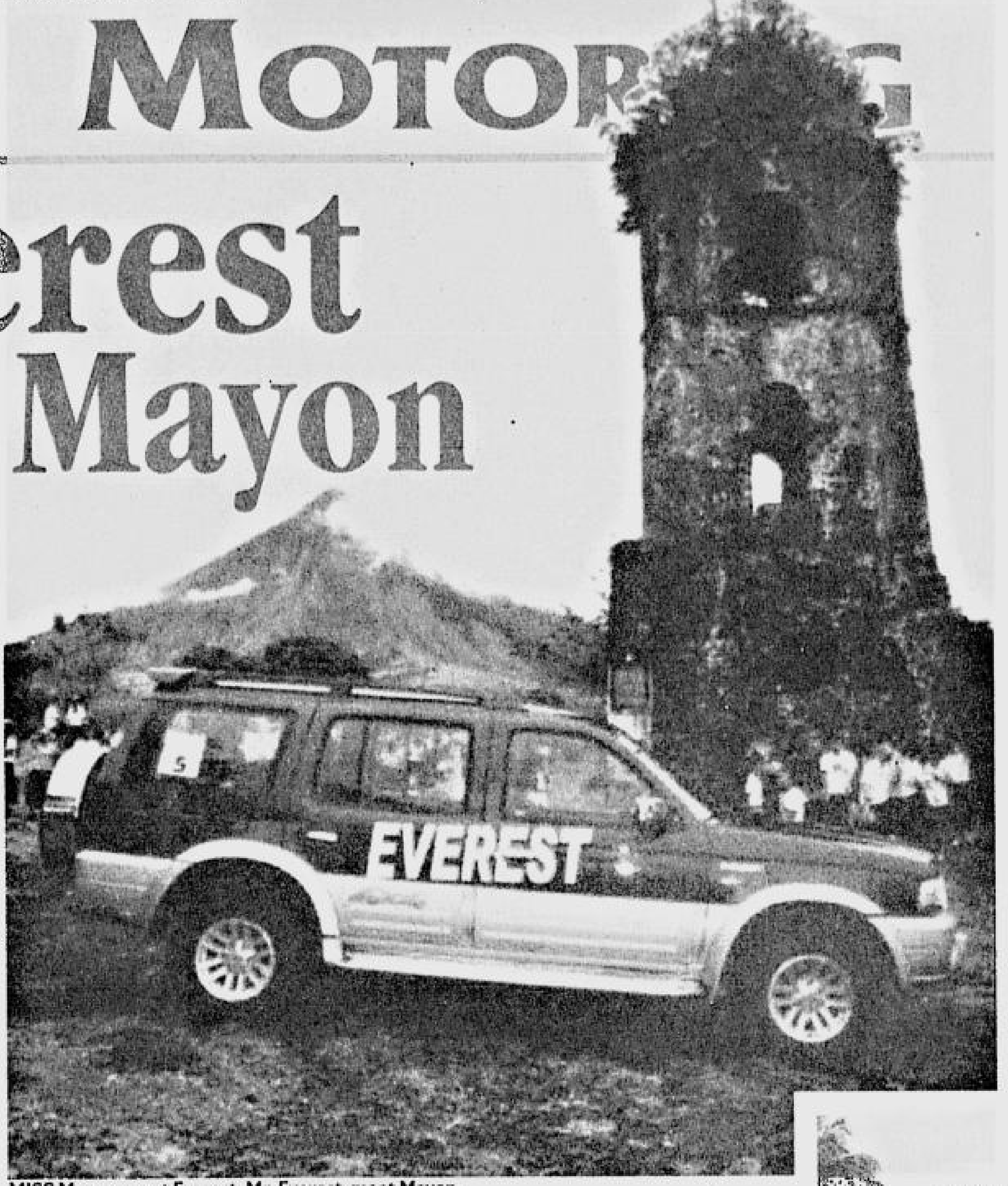
Per DTI-NCR Permit No 3205 Series of 2003

Everest bows to Mayon

Text and photos by Tessa R. Salazar



MISS Mayon, meet Everest. Mr. Everest, meet Mayon.

IF THERE'S one thing I've learned from this Ford-initiated trip to Albay Province, it is that even the highest mountain in the world has to bow in awe to the beauty of Mount Mayon.

Well, who can ever forget Daragang Magayon's beauty and intermittent tantrums? The near-perfect cone of this active volcano had been constantly threatened by many eruptions—eruptions that have become like periodic fireworks over the province's skies. Mayon's eruptions have also been fatal and destructive, with ejecta as big as houses and cars raining down on communities at the foot of the volcano, killing people and livestock. Ashfall and mudflows have frequently destroyed infrastructure, grounding power cables and insulators, leaving Albay and Sorsogon provinces without power. Indeed, during Mayon's famed eruptions, the people living at its foot felt like Sam and Frodo dodging lava flows and falling rocks.

This time, however, Mayon was asleep, so we ran circles around her and played with Donsol's elusive gentle giant Butanding (whale shark). With majestic Mayon in the background and the Pacific Ocean at our feet, the Butanding, which grew as big as buses, playfully hid under our outriggers, yet vanished in the blink of an eye. Do they ever see Mayon as we land dwellers do? We may never know, the whale sharks remaining enigmatic as they are, diving into the depths of the Pacific after growing bored with such puny playmates.

We do know, however, that our Ford sport utility vehicle (SUV), called Everest, was attracted to the lovely Mayon. We risked another eruption as the convoy of Everest-riding motorists drove closer and closer to the mountain, our cameras in hand.

We stopped for some time at the Cagsawa ruins, where we stayed for the sunset. The ruins of a half-buried steeple—all that was left of a church—stands as mute witness to one of Mayon's most destructive eruptions centuries ago.

Legend also has it that this beautiful but moody mountain is also very shy, and would often cover her top in thick clouds, preventing many tourists that photo-op showing her perfect top. Motoring journalists joked that Mayon refuses to show herself to womanizers, especially. I believed the opposite though, when she displayed herself in all her glory when the motoring men stood in front of her. I may be mistaken, though. Perhaps she was happy her long lost love Everest finally was by her side. Even if the Everest we brought was about 29,022 feet shorter.

Henry's newest baby

The Ford Everest we rode to Mayon is Henry's newest baby. It is the same Everest we drove on the island of Koh Chang in Thailand late last year.

Just like in any country in Asia, you can count the Everest in as a new "subspecies." Its form is built primarily to serve its owner in whatever driving conditions he or she wishes to go through. That is, the Everest can blend in nicely in urban traffic, but when needed, can work and sprint like a horse.

The amenities for the working and outdoorsy professional are also well rounded: cell phone jacks up front, laptop plugs, and in the cargo area a powerpoint for handheld electronic games, a 12V ref, water heater, stereo, camping stoves, emergency lights, you name it. There are even front seat back map pockets with additional cell phone stowage pockets on the back of each front seat.

Diesel vibes

You can tell Everest runs on diesel. You can feel the vibration on the pedal and in the gear shifters. But the vibes are good, like the fine hammering motions of a bumblebee.

The Everest may be unfairly compared to the P5-million BMW X5 3.0 diesel mini-SUV, which needs just eight seconds to go from 0 to 100 kph (Everest needs about 12 sec), but this mid-sized SUV has the 2.5-liter turbo-charged intercooler diesel engine Ranger users have come to love and depend on. The engine roars out 1,110 PS at 3,500 rpm, which means more "oomph" on and off the road.

A wastegate also regulates the boost. So, instead of feeling an endless pull. The wastegate relieves some pressure.

We got to test the handling and the braking system twice during the trip to Bicol, when I had to step on the brakes because dogs (or was it a deer?) crossed the highway in Atimonan, Quezon. Needless to say, the ABS worked wonders on my unit and on the other Everests following our lead.

Thankfully, though, we didn't have to experience firsthand all the other safety features of the Everest, such as the limited slip differential, dual airbags, intrusion beams, collapsible steering column and fuel tank shields.

'Glorified Ranger'

Ford is that proud of its Ranger heritage, transplanting its platform to the Everest. Perhaps, we may even call Everest as the "glorified Ranger"—the platform of a reliable Ranger, the luxurious, sporty body of an SUV, and ride comfort smoother than a pickup.

I drove the Everest on some of the roughest off-road sections of Albay on the way to unspoiled Vera waterfalls. The route was "spiced" with wet mud with large rocks and a light downpour.

We utilized the 4H and the 4L modes, especially on our way back to Legaspi. My four passengers cheerily "bounced" along: Ford's credit president Mike Paelmo, manufacturing's Danny Dizon, communication's Nenuka Guba and Manila Standard's Dino Directo. They all dozed off (Dino snoring even) during the entire trip back. And to think we were off-roading.

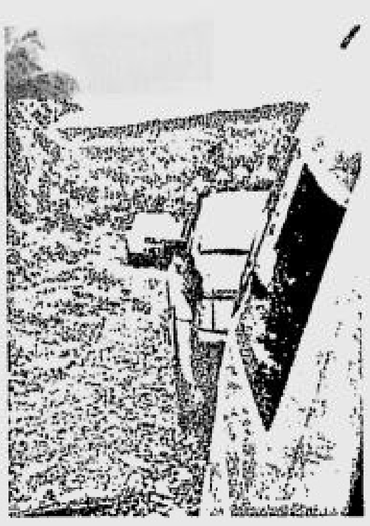
The soft suspension could have been the result of large diameter tires, considering the suspension was just leaf spring. Had the tire profiles been lower, we would have felt more jarring bounces. And because we were "fully loaded" (meaning five people were inside), the ride became softer as the balance between the spring tension and the load weight had been, more or less, achieved.

Straightforward look

The Everest design may be oversimplified for some, a bit boxy even, but it is "timeless" as Ford people insist. At the very least, Ford has applied a conservative design here. It is this simplicity and plain elegance that has made European-designed cars outlast their more radical-looking competitors in the looks department.

The size is just right, as well. This is for the motorist who wouldn't want a full-sized SUV occupying all the garage space, but not a too-small compact SUV either. Everest has a length of 4,958 mm, a width of 1,805 mm and a height of 1,835 mm—not nearly the dimensions of a full-sized SUV Explorer, but considerably more robust compared to the Escape's length of 4,415 mm, width of 1,825 mm and height of 1,775 mm.

Verdict? The seven-seater Everest looks like a cross between an Asian utility vehicle and an SUV, albeit subtly so, and is competitively priced at P995,000 for the 4x2 manual transmission and P1.210 million for the 4x4 MT. For 11 km per liter fuel mileage, you get the strength of a beast and the conservative looks of a shy *dalaga* (maiden). No wonder Mayon was happy to see us with Everest. She hates her fantastic looks being upstaged.



THE ROUTE to Vera waterfalls

MOST WANTED!

NISSAN FRONTIER

Guru of pickups

NISSAN Frontier, assembled and distributed by Universal Motors Corp., can aptly be called the "Guru of Pickups." Seasoned by time yet showing no signs of slowing down, it continues to accelerate in terms of dominating the double cab compact pickup category.

Certified No. 1 based on official records of the Truck Manufacturers Association of the Philippines, Nissan Frontier has worn the best-selling badge since 2000.

Capping its 2003 with another record-breaking feat, the Frontier ended its race to the top with a 34.2 percent of the overall market share or a total of 2,100 units sold to customers.

Continuing the legacy

The Frontier continues to defy mediocrity by coming up with innovations that give premium to customers' wants and needs for comfort, performance and durability.

Unveiled recently by the company was the newest variant of Frontier named "Titanium."

This fine specimen was built to give clients the best of both worlds combining features of the 4x2 and 4x4 pickup models.

Its bold façade exudes masculinity to the last detail, sleek with its modern exterior and roughed up with all the tough amenities to boot.

The Titanium arrives first in offering a rain-sensor accessory that automatically activates the wiper at the slightest drop of rain; the rear-seat center armrest with cupholder is conveniently placed to tuck in your hot or cold beverages anytime; and the Titanium's power-signal mirror is ingeniously added to aid

FRONTIER/B11

Mitsubishi: The No. 1 sports patron

FULL TANK

Al Mendoza

WHICH car company in the Philippines commands the biggest respect when it comes to sponsoring major sporting events?

Sirit? It's Mitsubishi Motors Philippines.

Through the years, Mitsubishi has been an active partner of Philippine sport. No other car company can lay claim to that. For one, Mitsubishi has been bankrolling the Philta Junior International Tennis Tournament for the last 15 years now. For another, Mitsubishi has been the official car of the Philippine Open Golf Championship since the mid-'80s yet.

* * *

I bumped into Col. Buddy Andrada (ret.), the president of the Philippine Lawn Tennis Association (Philta), on Monday evening during a huge Mitsubishi party bash at Shangri-La Makati. He told me that the next Mitsubishi Junior International Tennis Championship will be held in April in Manila.

"Do you know that without Mitsubishi's help, we would not have held the junior championships yearly?" the colonel said. "For 15 straight years, Mitsubishi has been our sole supporter for the international junior event. The likes of Andy Roddick, Lleyton Hewitt and Mark Philoppousis have played in our tournaments. Today, the three are among the world's best players."

The amiable, soft-spoken colonel, who was recently elected president of the Asian Tennis Federation, reminded me that the next Mitsubishi Junior International Tennis Tournament is on the first week of April.

"Always, our major junior event is held every April," he said. "Hope to see you watching our future stars play again on the month of your birth?"

You can count on that, Colonel Buddy.

* * *

And speaking of the Mitsubishi party on Monday, occasion was the farewell bash for Teruhiko Shibata, president/CEO of Mitsubishi, who will soon leave for Tokyo. His replacement is Kengo Takase.

In his farewell remarks, Shibata said he would always enjoy "the fond memories" of his stint at the Mitsubishi Motors Philippines.

Said Shibata: "Tonight I bid farewell to all of you at the end of my assignment as president and CEO of Mitsubishi Motors Philippines.

"As I say goodbye, I realize that in many ways I have been fortunate to be assigned to MMPC during these challenging times.

"I met business adversity and it has given me a better understanding of the structural aspects of an operation like that of MMPC and as well that of its human dimensions. It was indeed a challenging and rewarding experience with its fair share of frustration and what could have been. I will cherish the memories of our working together to level up MMPC operations and to overcome the competitive challenge in this age of globalization.

"I have truly enjoyed the warmth of hospitality and friendship that I enjoyed during my stay here in the Philippines. I also acknowledge the level of professionalism of my MMPC colleagues. Those fond memories I will enjoy always.

"Beyond Philippine shores I will be your ambassador and advocate of the many good and great things foreigners fail to recognize and appreciate in the Philippine case.

"I would like to thank all of you for your support and cooperation during my assignment as president of MMPC.

"Maramimg salamat po."

He was given a warm applause by an audience that included Executive Secretary Alberto Romulo.

* * *

Shibata's successor is an expert in production engineering and manufacturing operations. Takase's last position before MMPC was as general manager of Mitsubishi Motors Nagoya Motor Vehicle Works.

In his response, Takase said he would "build on the programs that MMPC now enjoys."

His speech:

"First of all, I would like to thank Mr. Shibata for his support and guidance as I assume the position of president and chief executive officer of MMPC.

"Mr. Shibata has and his predecessors as well, have implemented so many good programs with results that MMPC now enjoys. It is my intention to build on these programs.

"MMPC will continue to focus on achieving top level of customer satisfaction with vehicles that excite, offer excellent value for money, and top quality and reliability. We will achieve this by superior processes from our manufacturing to vehicle after sales that deliver consistent results.

"MMPC will continue to make efforts to make a contribution to Philippine society and to support government in its renewed effort to promote the economy and automotive industry.

"My mission is to bring up MMPC to the next level of global competition. MMPC aims to be an exporter of Philippine-made vehicles to the world. Please support me to realize this objective. *Maraming salamat po sa inyong lahat.*"

* * *

I think Takase is a team man in that he values supporting government initiatives. By advocating Mitsubishi's support for government "in its renewed effort to promote the economy and automotive industry," Takase appears on the right track. Meaning, he is not one to rock the boat.

Takase's promise to make MMPC go up the "next level of global competition" bears watching, too. And his aim of making Mitsubishi an "exporter of Philippine-made vehicles to the world" is a shot in the right direction.

With Romulo in the audience, I hope Takase's message goes straight to Malacañang's present occupant—or whoever makes it there after the May polls.

* * *

HONDA LAUNCH. Honda Cars Philippines will hold its press presentation of the New Civic on Feb. 9 at 6 p.m. Unlike in the Mitsubishi party, Honda has not specified a formal attire in the Monday bash, according to the invite sent by Honda's Sheryl delos Santos. I like that. I do not have that many business suits for formal occasions; the coat I used in the Mitsubishi party is due for laundry.

* * *

QUOTE ME. With fuel prices consistently rising in a moment's notice, better fill your tank full each time you gas up.

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 5, 2004
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LIFESTYLE

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Editor Chelo Banal-Formoso

Cook up a special Valentine's Day

SURPRISE your Valentine by revealing your hidden culinary skills.

San Miguel PureFoods Culinary Center will help you impress the loved one on the day of hearts. Make the Monterey Beef Tenderloin with Salad Greens in Hot Mango Coulis the pièce de résistance of your Valentine dinner.

Cap the culinary "show" with Chocolate Passion Cake or Choconut Fondue for dessert.

Check out more recipes at www.mygreatfood.com or send a self-addressed stamped envelope to San Miguel Pure Foods Culinary Center, Legazpi cor. Eagle Streets, Barrio Ugong, Pasig City.

MONTEREY Beef Tenderloin with Salad Greens in Hot Mango Coulis

Monterey Beef Tenderloin with Salad Greens in Hot Mango Coulis

Beef:

2 pc Monterey Beef Tenderloin Steaks, 1 inch thick

2 tbsp extra virgin olive oil

2 tbsp minced garlic

2 tsp coarsely ground black pepper

2 tsp soy sauce

Salad:

50 g salad greens, trimmed and cut into serving pieces

½ c fresh ripe mango puree

1 tbsp fish sauce (*patis*)

1 ½ tbsp fresh lime (*dayap*) juice

½ tbsp sugar

1 pc red finger chili, seeds removed, chopped

2 tbsp fresh coriander (*wansoy*), chopped

2 tbsp coarsely chopped walnuts

2 tbsp Magnolia Cheddar Cheese, coarsely grated

Beef: Season beef tenderloin steaks with olive oil, garlic, pepper and soy sauce. Set aside. Preheat griddle or frying pan until smoke appears. Using medium heat, pan-grill steaks according to desired doneness (rare, medium, well-done). Serve with accompanying salad.

Salad: Combine mango puree, fish sauce, lime juice, sugar, chili and coriander in a bowl. Mix well. Toss salad greens in mixture. Divide mixture into two and top with walnuts and cheese.

Makes two servings.

Food cost per serving: P87.20

Tip: To ensure that steaks come out juicy, cook in a pre-heated pan. Turn steaks only once and refrain from pressing steaks with a turner.

CHOCOLATE Espresso Passion Cake

Chocolate Espresso Passion Cake

200 g bittersweet chocolate, chopped

1/3 c Magnolia Gold Butter, unsalted

2 tbsp Matador Brandy

1 ½ tsp coffee powder

3 pcs eggs

1/3 c sugar

Preheat oven to 350°F. Line a 6"-removable bottom pan with 3"-high side.

In a saucepan, melt chocolate and butter over low heat. Remove from fire and whisk in brandy and coffee powder. Cool to lukewarm.

In a mixing bowl, beat eggs and sugar until light and fluffy. Fold ¼ of the egg mixture into the cooled chocolate mixture to lighten. Then fold the chocolate mixture into the remaining egg mixture. Pour into prepared pan.

Bake for 40 minutes. Cool cake. Serve with a dollop of cream or a scoop of vanilla ice cream.

Makes two-four slices.

Food cost per serving : P14.75

CHOCONUT Fondue

Choconut Fondue

1 200g Star Choconut Spread

assorted fresh fruits: banana, sliced; mangoes, cubed; strawberry, halved; kiwi, sliced

Melt choconut in a double boiler. Preferably transfer to a fondue dish. Serve with fruits.

Makes four-six servings.

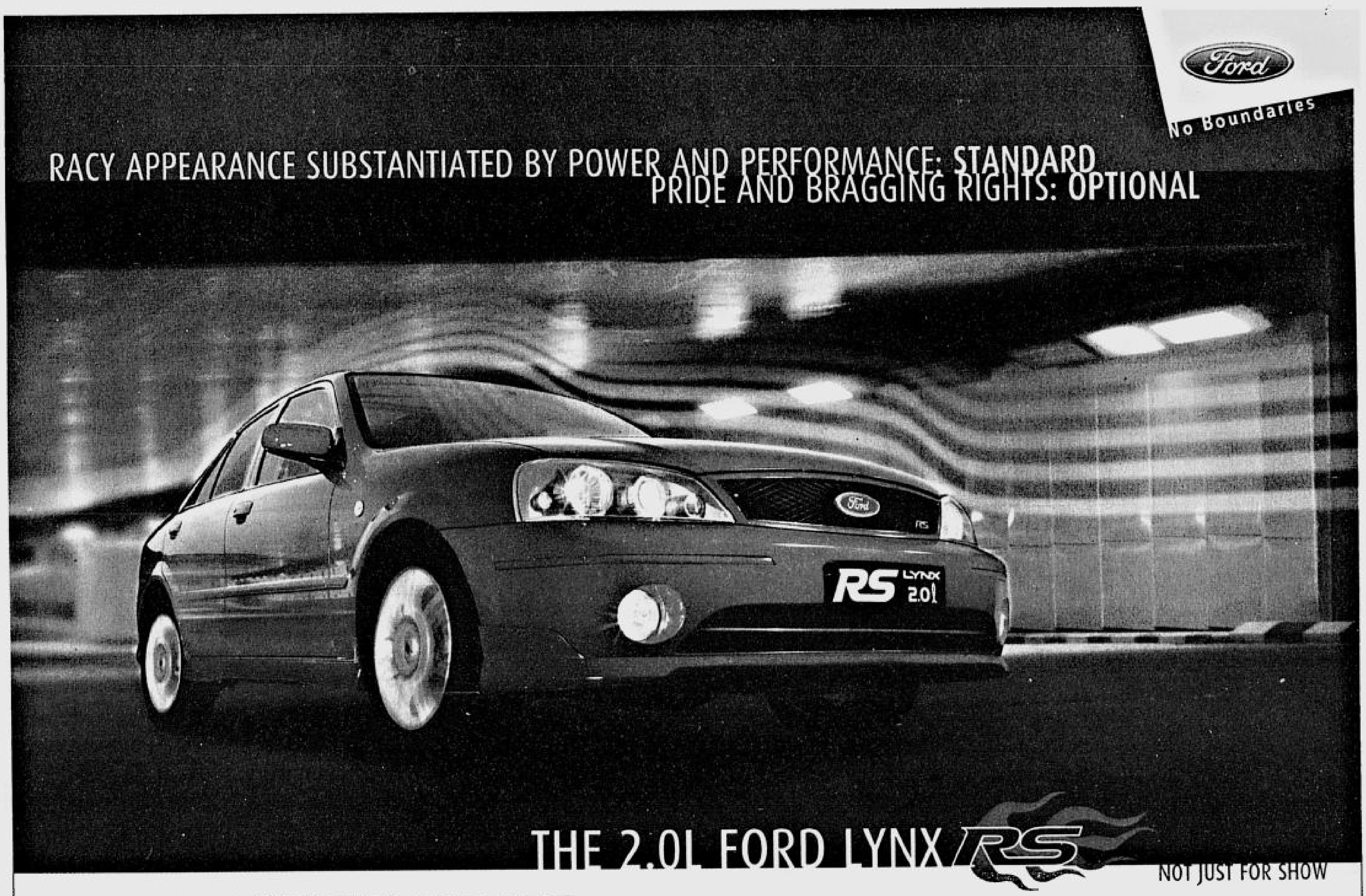
WHAT'S ON AT ROBINSONS

JED MADDELA

Sundays will be filled with music and harmony at Robinsons as one of the country's upcoming crooners take the stage. Listen to the powerful voice of Jed Maddela as he sings cuts from his latest album on this promo mall tour.

[illegible] Sunday [illegible]
Activity [illegible]
Robinsons Place [illegible]

ROBINSONS Place
L I P A

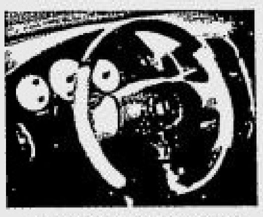


RACY APPEARANCE SUBSTANTIATED BY POWER AND PERFORMANCE: STANDARD
PRIDE AND BRAGGING RIGHTS: OPTIONAL

THE 2.0L FORD LYNX RS

NOT JUST FOR SHOW

Sophisticated VICS engine



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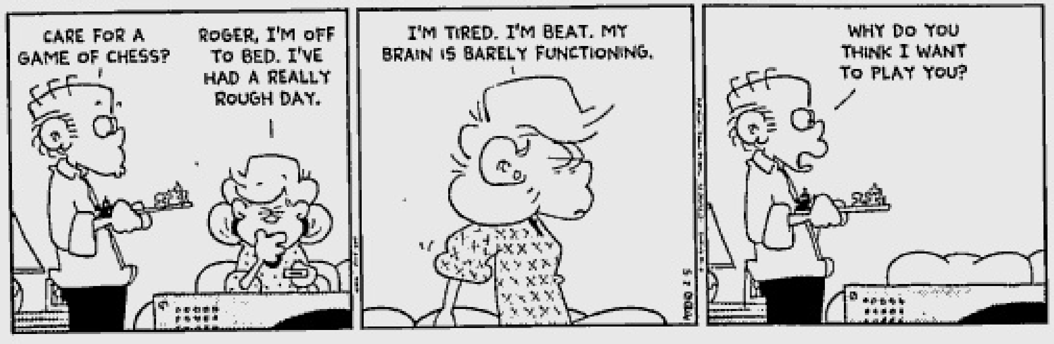
BEST COPY AVAILABLE

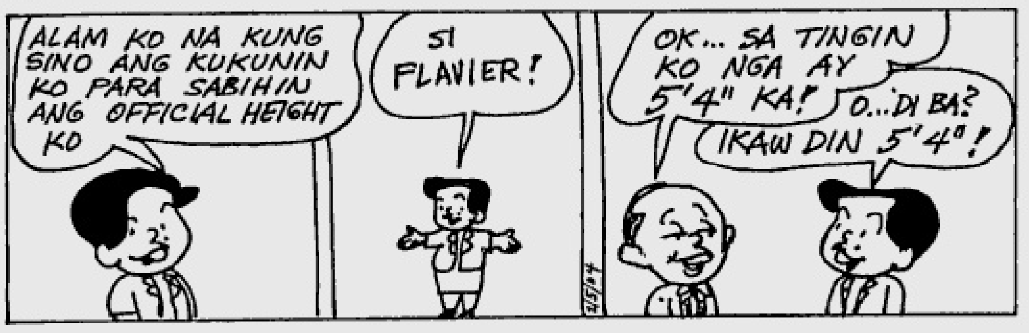
FOXTROT

BY BILL AMEND


CARE FOR A GAME OF CHESS?
ROGER, I'M OFF TO BED. I'VE HAD A REALLY ROUGH DAY.
I'M TIRED. I'M BEAT. MY BRAIN IS BARELY FUNCTIONING.
WHY DO YOU THINK I WANT TO PLAY YOU?

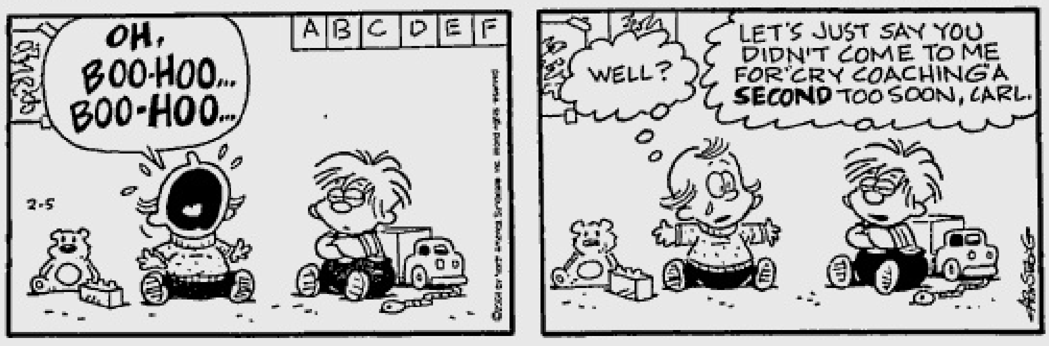
A. LIPIN

BY JESS ABRERA


ALAM KO NA KUNG SINO ANG KUKUNIN KO PARA SABIHIN ANG OFFICIAL HEIGHT KO
SI FLAVIER!
OK... SA TINGIN KO NGA AY 5'4" KA!
O...DI BA? IKAW DIN 5'4"!
2/5/04

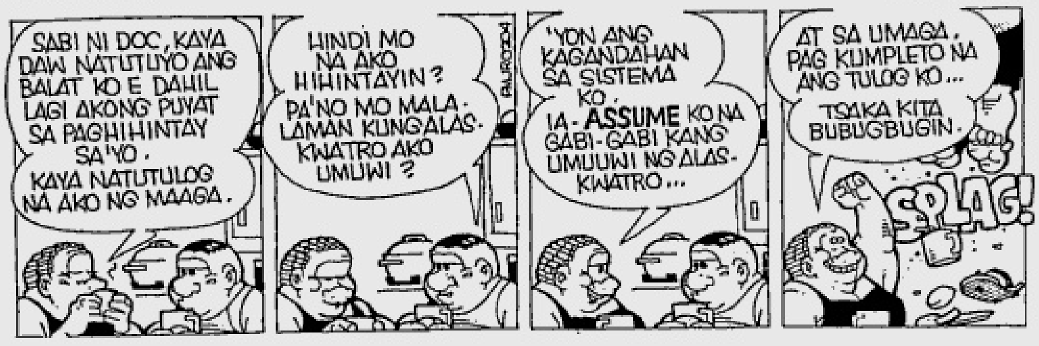
MARVIN

BY TOM ARMSTRONG


OH, BOO-HOO... BOO-HOO...
A B C D E F
2-5
WELL?
LET'S JUST SAY YOU DIDN'T COME TO ME FOR 'CRY COACHING' A SECOND TOO SOON, CARL.

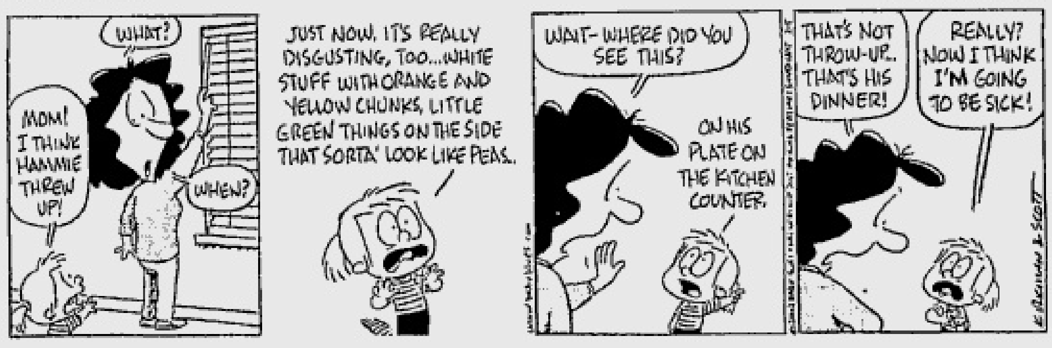
PUGAD BABOY

BY P.M. JUNIOR


SABI NI DOC, KAYA DAW NATUTUYO ANG BALAT KO E DAHIL LAGI AKONG PUYAT SA PAGHIHINTAY SA'YO. KAYA NATUTULOG NA AKO NG MAAGA.
HINDI MO NA AKO HIHINTAYIN? PA'NO MO MALALAMAN KUNG ALAS-KWATRO AKO UMUWI?
'YON ANG KAGANDAHAN SA SISTEMA KO. IA-ASSUME KO NA GABI-GABI KANG UMUUWI NG ALAS-KWATRO...
AT SA UMAGA, PAG KUMPLETO NA ANG TULOG KO... TSAKA KITA BUBUGBUGIN.
SPLAG!

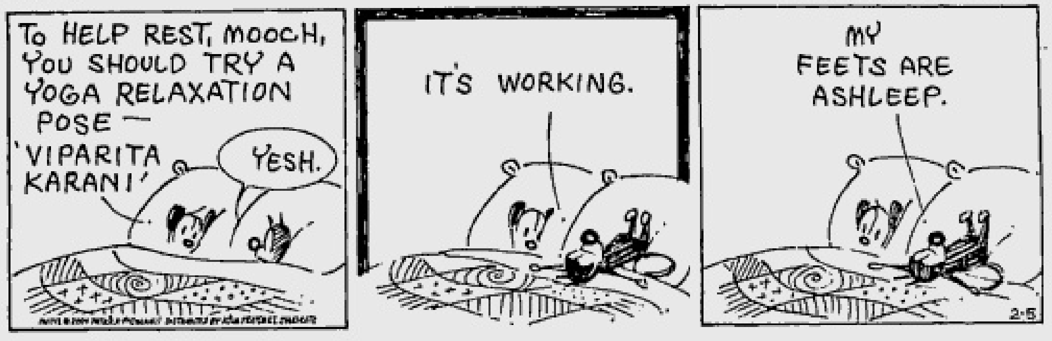
BABY BLUES

BY JERRY SCOTT


WHAT?
MOM! I THINK HAMMIE THREW UP!
WHEN?
JUST NOW. IT'S REALLY DISGUSTING, TOO...WHITE STUFF WITH ORANGE AND YELLOW CHUNKS, LITTLE GREEN THINGS ON THE SIDE THAT SORTA' LOOK LIKE PEAS.
WAIT- WHERE DID YOU SEE THIS?
ON HIS PLATE ON THE KITCHEN COUNTER.
THAT'S NOT THROW-UP. THAT'S HIS DINNER!
REALLY? NOW I THINK I'M GOING TO BE SICK!
KIRKMAN & SCOTT

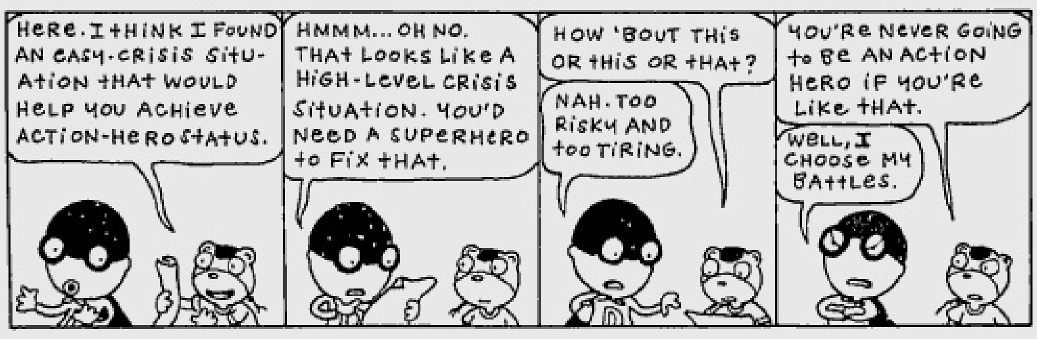
MUTTS

BY PATRICK McDONNELL


TO HELP REST, MOOCH, YOU SHOULD TRY A YOGA RELAXATION POSE — 'VIPARITA KARANI'
YESH.
IT'S WORKING.
MY FEETS ARE ASHLEEP.
2-5

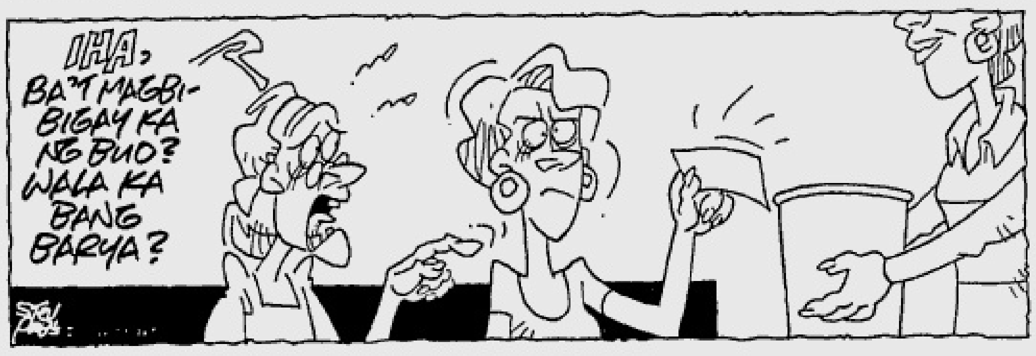
ATOMO AND WEBOY

BY LYRA GARCELLANO


HERE. I THINK I FOUND AN EASY-CRISIS SITUATION THAT WOULD HELP YOU ACHIEVE ACTION-HERO STATUS.
HMMM... OH NO. THAT LOOKS LIKE A HIGH-LEVEL CRISIS SITUATION. YOU'D NEED A SUPERHERO TO FIX THAT.
HOW 'BOUT THIS OR THIS OR THAT?
NAH. TOO RISKY AND TOO TIRING.
YOU'RE NEVER GOING TO BE AN ACTION HERO IF YOU'RE LIKE THAT.
WELL, I CHOOSE MY BATTLES.

DIVINE COMEDY

BY STEVEN PABALINAS


IHA, BA'T MAGBIBIGAY KA NG BUO? WALA KA BANG BARYA?

HOROSCOPE

BY FRANCIS DRAKE

YOU BORN TODAY: You have charm, grace and style. You also have a fine mind that's capable of deep analysis and shrewd observations. People know they can depend on you. You have many sides to your character, some of which are known to only a few. Privately, you are very emotional. Work hard in the year ahead for rewards in 2005.

Birthdate of: Jennifer Jason Leigh, actress; Hank Aaron, baseball player; Barbara Hershey, actress.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): You might feel confused about someone's romantic intentions today. Is this person actually flirting with you? Play it safe, but always give others the benefit of the doubt.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): You might be tempted to fib or tell a lie in order to avoid an embarrassing situation or a confession. You will regret this later. (Tell the truth.)

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): Daydreams fill your thoughts today. This makes it difficult to concentrate; nevertheless, Einstein said our imagination is a preview of life's coming attractions.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): This is not a good day to spend money. You're not sure what you want; furthermore, you could go overboard on something. Wait until the weekend.

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): Try to be extra-clear in all your communications today, especially with close friends and partners. Someone might deceive you; you might deceive someone else. These deceptions could be unintentional or on purpose.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): You might feel full of self-doubt today. You might question whether or not you can do something. Pay little attention to these feelings. They'll be gone by the weekend.

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): If you think you don't have the confidence to deal with children or possibly a situation related to the arts, gambling or professional sports—just wait a few days. This feeling will leave you.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): There's a strong chance you're not getting the straight goods from someone today. This deception could originate with someone in a position of authority. Learn to judge things for yourself.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): Don't doubt your intelligence and your ability to make your own decisions. If you question yourself today, give it little thought.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): Financial confusion makes this a difficult day to spend money or make important business decisions. Try to postpone whatever you can.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): You definitely have to go more than halfway when dealing with others today. The Moon opposes you now. You have no choice.

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): If you think people are being fishy or evasive at work, they probably are. Trust your gut instincts. Your body can recognize a lie a mile away.

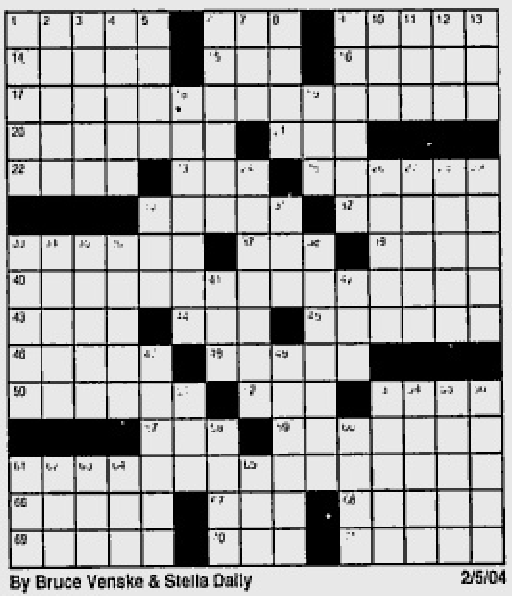
DAILY CROSSWORD

ACROSS

1 Breaks suddenly
6 I've been __!
9 Wedding VIP
14 Creepy
15 Lawyers' org.
16 Detroit products
17 Start of never-say-die advice
20 Suaver
21 Tennis stroke
22 Kisser
23 Dog tags, e.g.
25 Greens courses
30 Feigned manner
32 Breakfast ring
33 Molded
37 Clod
39 Fleck or Bartok
40 Part 2 of advice
43 Pieces of pelvises
44 Grand Casino letters
45 Main arteries
46 Article of political platform
48 Precipitous
50 DOS part
52 Slangy contradiction
53 Sentry's command
57 Negative votes
59 Abstracted musing
61 End of advice
66 Pedro's pal
67 Letter after phi
68 Desktop images
69 Gaseous element
70 Shade or tone
71 Not the sharpest knife in the drawer

DOWN

1 Arrangement
2 India's Jawaharlal
3 Semitic people
4 Pocket breads
5 Like a seam
6 Afro or beehive
7 Alphabet start
8 Willie Wonka's creator
9 Tree with a huge trunk
10 Have regrets
11 "__ My Party"
12 Put on
13 Superlative suffix
18 Inheritance system
19 Spanish two
24 Abominable __
26 Work
27 Man in the field
28 Actress Reese
29 Bumps off
30 "SNL" writer Tina
31 Mai __ cocktail
33 Omits
34 Like San Francisco
35 John Smith, perhaps
36 Factory
38 More level
41 That's gross!
42 Actress Myrna
47 School in Gambier, OH
49 Combat mission
51 Cow's cry
53 From this day forward
54 Inert gas
55 Security claims
56 Short
58 Of this kind
60 Null's partner
61 Disfigure
62 Doctors' org.
63 Goat's offspring
64 Sense of self
65 Egyptian deity



By Bruce Venske & Stella Daily
Madison, WI
2/5/04

Wednesday's Puzzle Solved

J	A	M	E	S	■	A	R	C	H	■	R	U	B	E
A	P	A	R	T	■	P	E	R	I	■	E	N	O	S
C	R	I	M	E	■	A	N	I	L	■	A	C	D	C
K	I	T	A	N	D	C	A	B	O	O	D	L	E	■
P	O	R	■	O	A	H	U	■	■	U	S	E	R	S
O	R	E	S	■	M	E	L	O	T	T	■	A	E	S
T	I	D	E	S	■	■	T	H	E	W	O	R	K	S
■	■	■	A	T	O	M	■	S	L	I	T	■	■	■
W	H	O	L	E	H	O	G	■	■	T	I	L	E	R
I	O	N	■	R	O	B	U	S	T	■	S	E	M	I
G	R	E	E	N	■	■	I	C	O	N	■	B	I	D
■	A	C	R	O	S	S	T	H	E	B	O	A	R	D
S	T	E	N	■	O	P	A	L	■	C	O	R	A	L
E	I	N	E	■	A	C	R	E	■	T	N	O	T	E
C	O	T	S	■	R	A	S	P	■	V	A	N	E	S

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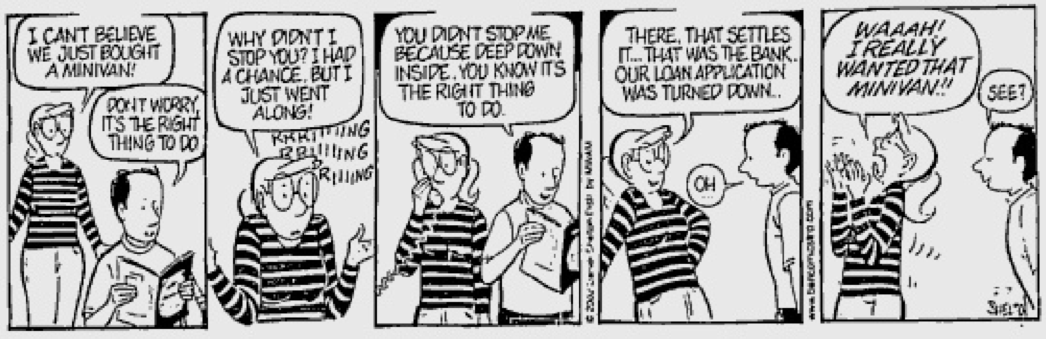
2/5/04

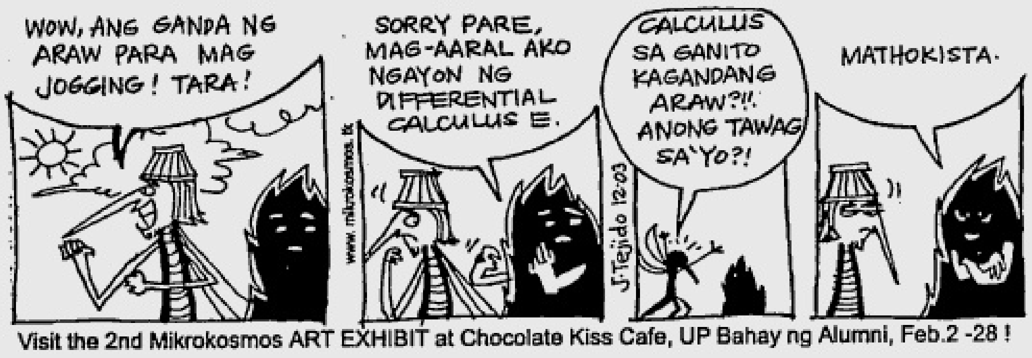
BEN

BY DANIEL SHELTON


I CAN'T BELIEVE WE JUST BOUGHT A MINIVAN!
DON'T WORRY, IT'S THE RIGHT THING TO DO
WHY DIDN'T I STOP YOU? I HAD A CHANCE, BUT I JUST WENT ALONG!
KRRIIIING BRIIIING RIIIING
YOU DIDN'T STOP ME BECAUSE DEEP DOWN INSIDE, YOU KNOW IT'S THE RIGHT THING TO DO.
THERE, THAT SETTLES IT... THAT WAS THE BANK. OUR LOAN APPLICATION WAS TURNED DOWN.
OH
WAAAH! I REALLY WANTED THAT MINIVAN!!
SEE?

MIKROKOSMOS

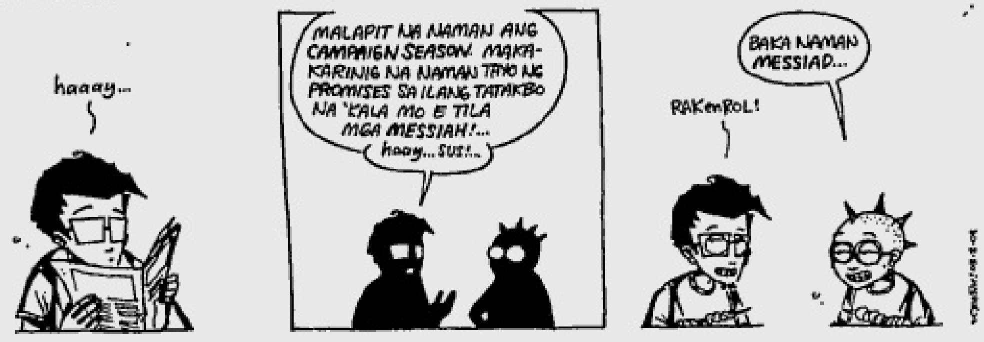
BY JOMIKE TEJIDO


WOW, ANG GANDA NG ARAW PARA MAG JOGGING! TARA!
SORRY PARE, MAG-AARAL AKO NGAYON NG DIFFERENTIAL CALCULUS E.
CALCULUS SA GANITO KAGANDANG ARAW?!! ANONG TAWAG SA'YO?!
MATHOKISTA.
www.mikrokosmos.tk
J. Tejido 12-03

Visit the 2nd Mikrokosmos ART EXHIBIT at Chocolate Kiss Cafe, UP Bahay ng Alumni, Feb.2 -28 !

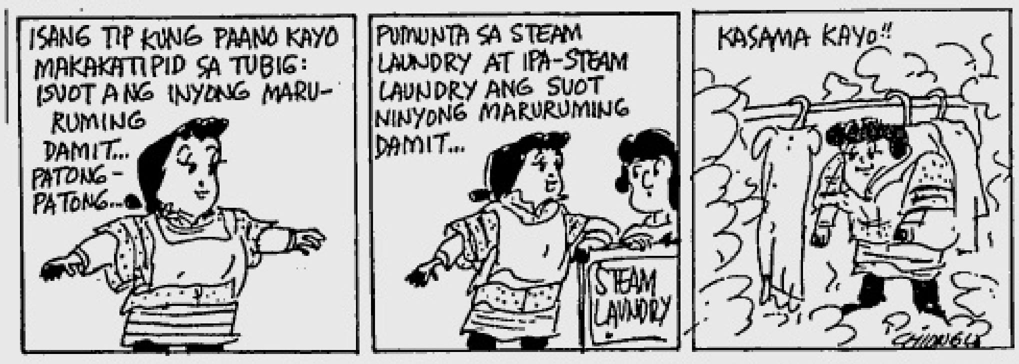
KIKO MACHINE

BY MANIX ABRERA


haaay...
MALAPIT NA NAMAN ANG CAMPAIGN SEASON. MAKAKARINIG NA NAMAN TAYO NG PROMISES SA ILANG TATAKBO NA 'KALA MO E TILA MGA MESSIAH!...
haay...SUS!..
RAKenROL!
BAKA NAMAN MESSIAD...

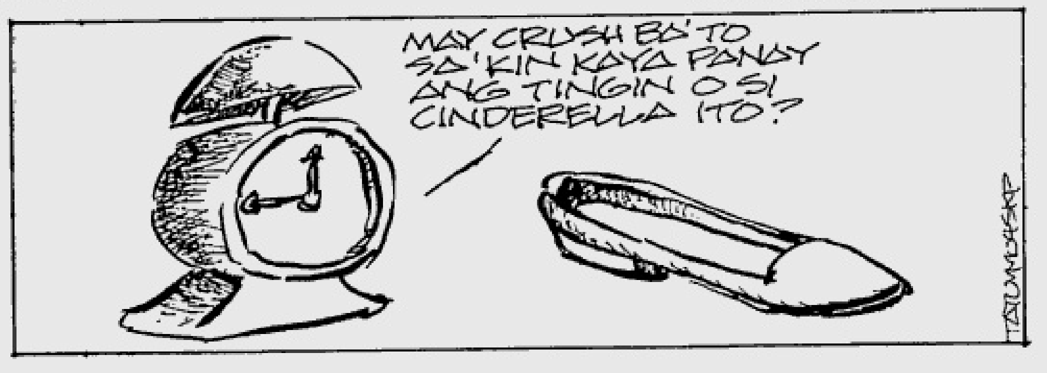
LOVEKNOTS

BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO


ISANG TIP KUNG PAANO KAYO MAKAKATIPID SA TUBIG: ISUOT ANG INYONG MARUMING DAMIT... PATONG-PATONG...
PUMUNTA SA STEAM LAUNDRY AT IPA-STEAM LAUNDRY ANG SUOT NINYONG MARURUMING DAMIT...
STEAM LAUNDRY
KASAMA KAYO!!
CHIONGLO

TULDOK

BY PAPU AND TATUM MILAMBILING


MAY CRUSH BA 'TO SA'KIN KAYA PANAY ANG TINGIN O SI CINDERELLA ITO?
TATUM

Clients complain about cable TV 'dis'-service

THE CONSUMER

Marietta Velasco Giron

GRIPES against cable television service top the list of consumer complaints we compiled this week.

A disgruntled subscriber wrote to us: "Not only are program advisories of Home Cable erroneous, but the company doesn't seem to have a telephone number for consumer complaints.

"Last Feb. 1, for instance, I wanted to report that none of scheduled programs listed on its Channel 3 advisory was showing on the channels where they were supposed to air. But when I called Home Cable to call attention to the error, I got the exasperating automated call distribution system instructing callers to press this and that number for specific concern.

"For example, there is a number to press if you want to subscribe, another number if you want to request for a technician, or a number for inquiries on where and how to pay your bill, and so on. When I pressed the number supposedly for service, all I got was one ring followed by complete silence. I had no choice but to surf all the channels to find out what was showing."

No less than Ali Sotto and Lolit Solis were heard complaining over the radio about cable TV disservice. Like our first disgruntled subscriber, Sotto griped about erroneous program advisories. Solis, on the other hand, grumbled that all these months, she had been paying rent for a cable TV converter that her television unit did not need at all. She wasn't aware that her television was already cable TV-ready and did not need a converter. We would like to think the technician who hooked up her unit to cable service didn't know his job and was not guilty of deceiving an innocent subscriber.

Constant transmission failure is our own complaint. Although brief, it is certainly annoying when the program you are watching suddenly goes off the air. Calling the attention of Destiny Cable!

Other consumer gripes

The problem with imported products is it takes too long to get replacement parts, that is, if the repair center can get them at all. Here's a typical complaint from journalist Linda Bolido: "My Mont Blanc fountain pen has been at Rustan's Cartier repair center for almost a year because the replacement part is still being ordered from the manufacturer abroad. When I brought it in for repair in May last year, I was told it would take at least two months to get a replacement."

If I may add to that, I have a Sheaffer sign pen with a broken nib that couldn't be repaired for lack of spare parts. I waited two years. Like the Mont Blanc pen, the particular Sheaffer's model was too expensive to throw away. What I did was to bring the expensive pen to a jeweler who was resourceful enough to wield his chisel and put the pen back to working condition. He charged me P50.

Senior citizens react

Our column last week about violations of the senior citizens law on privilege discount generated a lot of feedback. Here are examples:

From Jaime Hernando of Vintar, Laoag City: "The leading drugstore here limits the number of tablets and capsules (sold to) senior citizens. In our case, the supply is good for only three to five days.

"This drugstore chain is not only profit-oriented but it has no heart at all for the elderly who have to go unnecessarily to the store often to replenish his stock of prescription medicine. Samples of these drugs are: Plendil, which is limited to only three to five tablets per purchase; glicizide (diamicron), five to 10 tablets.

"On behalf of senior citizens, may we request you through your column, to ask policy makers to pass a law on the following concerns: allow purchase of medicine by senior citizen's representative, the spouse for example, even without an authorization letter if the purchase record and doctor's prescription are presented. Prohibit drugstores from limiting number of tablets/capsules purchased by senior citizens to only three to five pieces?"

Reader J. L. Ong wrote that she bought the following medicines for her grand-aunt: anti-hypertension drugs, multivitamins, pain reliever drugs and Caltrate. Mercury Drug store gave the 20-percent discount for the first three items. But she was charged the full price for Caltrate. When she protested, the drugstore clerks explained that there was a management circular instructing them not to give senior citizen's discount for food supplements.

We mentioned in our column last week that the Bureau of Food and Drugs declared that herbal medicine, health supplements and popular over-the-counter drugs are covered by the senior citizen's law.

It pays to speak up

Rosario J. Cabangon complained to Meralco about the unlighted street in her neighborhood and didn't stop until the problem was resolved.

She wrote: "Through this consumer column, I wish to commend Modesto D. Dayon Jr., team leader of Meralco Call Center-technical assistance, for his unselfish assistance in installing the street lights on two posts. Dayon led the crew that inspected the site and installed complete new lighting fixture to replace the dilapidated set they found on the Meralco poles."

By the way, this is an advice from Dayon to Meralco customers: "Call #16211 for concerns that need immediate attention."

E-mail the author at mgiron@i-manila.com.ph or lifestyle@inquirer.com.ph

It is annoying when the show you are watching suddenly goes off the air

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Wed. Feb. 25 Sat. Feb. 28	International Fish and Seafood Dishes with the Perfect Sidings
Wed. Mar. 03 Sat. Mar. 06	International Lamb Dishes with the Perfect Sidings
Wed. Mar. 10 Sat. Mar. 13	Asian Dishes 1
Wed. Mar. 17 Sat. Mar. 20	International Gourmet Salads and Appetizing Dressings

International Cooking Series 2, 3, 4... to follow

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THE RICHMONDE Hotel's Pool Bar features a set dinner Feb. 13-14. Included in the menu are Pan-seared Lapu-Lapu in Tomato Saffron Sauce with Asparagus Tips and Mussel-Linguine, Marinated Lamb Chops served with Potato Leek Gratin and Grain Mustard Glazed Melon, and Prime Rib of Beef with Sesame-Crusted Baked Potato and Garden Vegetables. The dinner package comes with a glass of red or white wine or cocktail drink, coffee or tea. Call 6387777.

Gourmet celebration this season of hearts

DINING OUT

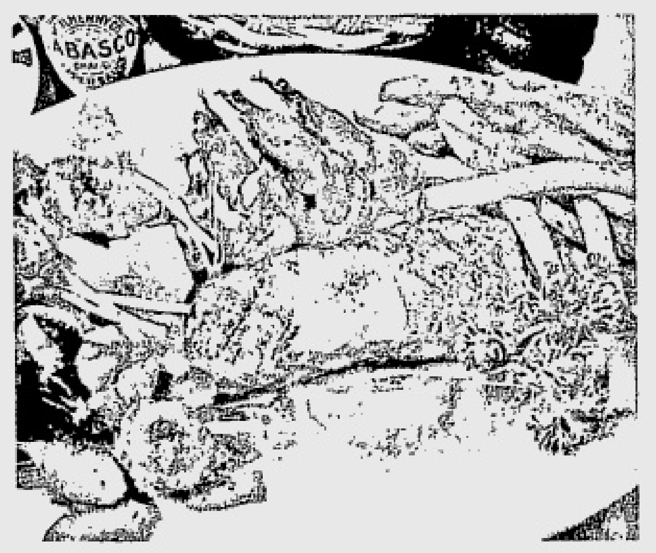
MARIO'S has a special set menu for Valentine. It includes Pumpkin Soup with sour cream and chives, Fish Piccata with capers and lemon, Oriental-spiced Fillet of Beef and Strawberry Mousse with Oreo crust. Guests may also choose from the menu featuring Continental and regional dishes. A photo-on-the-spot promo also awaits Valentine's Day diners. Mario's has outlets at Tomas Morato and Baguio City. Call 7240196, 7239893, 0920-9207521.

TERRAZAS de Punta Fuego features a Valentine feast of Marinated Norwegian Salmon set on Salad Bouquet with Passion Fruit Vinaigrette, Wild Mushroom Soup with Coriander Wantons, a choice of Pan-roasted French Duck Breast, Charbroiled Angus Rib-eye or Oven-roasted Sea Bass, Creamed Fruits and Berries, and Champagne Sauvignon. Call 8097316 or 0922-8661372.

ILUSTRADO offers a Valentine menu of Cured Tuna Sashimi Tartare with Cucumber, Seaweeds and Salmon in Wasabe-Soy Dressing; Oysters with Mushroom Duxelle in Champagne-Lobster Sauce; Rose Petal Salad with Chicken, Crabmeat and Mango in Hazelnut Oil Vinaigrette; Tomato and Broccoli Puree with Sauteed Sea Scallops; Braised Lamb Foreshank in Basil Jus with Rosemary-baked Garlic, Lentils and Grilled Vegetables; Beef Tenderloin in Onion-Herb Crust with Shiitake Mushroom and Duck Liver Mousse in Kahlua-Cabernet Sauce; Pan-fried Cornish Hen with Rondelle Cheese, Glazed Apple, Red Berry and Olive Pancake; Fillet of Alaskan Gindara with Vegetable Paella Strudel; Gambas-Mussel al Ajillo with Green Pea Stew; Baklava with Strawberry Sauce and Chocolate-dipped Strawberries; and Triple Chocolate Mousse with Butterscotch Sauce. Ilustrado is on General Luna St., Intramuros. Call 5273674-75.

HOTEL Pontefino in Batangas City presents French-Asian cuisine like Salad Nicoise, Demitasse of Chicken and Quail Egg Consomme, choice of Seafood Symphony or Prime Rib a la Periqueux and chocolate desserts. Women diners will get a rose chocolate. Call 4372103 or 4211710.

KOMIKS Café located at On Courtyard, Orosa corner Nakpil St., Malate offers exclusive dinner this Valentine with individualized menu and table setting of your choice. Call 5262547.



BURGOO American Bar and Restaurant offers two "combos" until Feb. 15. These are Grilled Salmon and Prawns served with Seafood Caesar Salad and Flavored French Fries; and Pan-Seared Steak Alfredo served on a bed of pasta with Alfredo gorgonzola sauce. Burgoo is at 310 Tomas Morato extension, South Triangle, Diliman, QC; 3/L, Power Plant Mall, Rockwell Center, Makati; and 2/L, The Podium, ADB Avenue, Ortigas Center, Mandaluyong. Call 9277424, 6875254 or 8981815.

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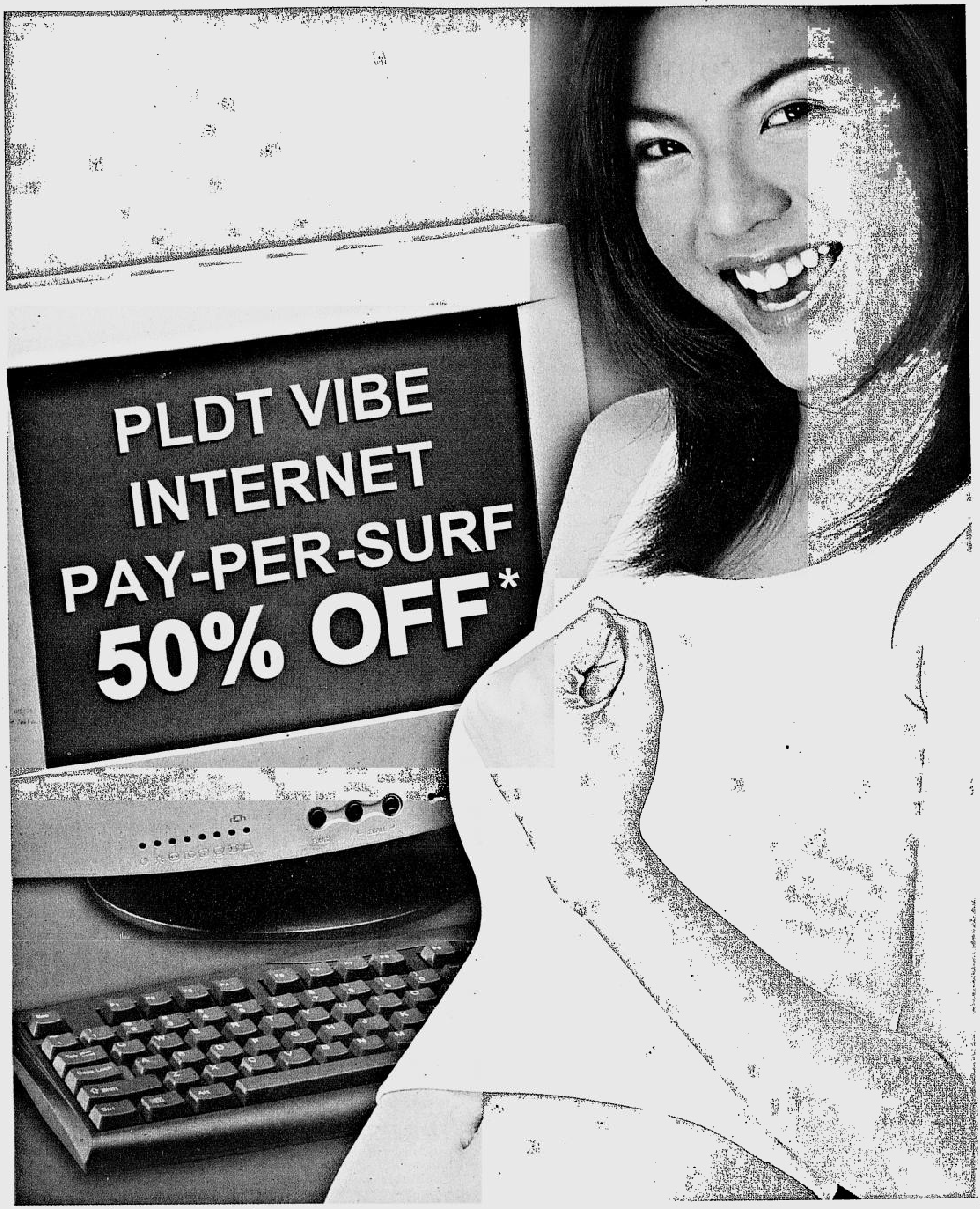

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Magical meal in a dream-like setting

By Anne A. Jambora

KITCHEN magic is once again being deliciously woven in a private, fine-dining enclave in a peaceful bucolic town. While eating out in verdant, panoramic wide spaces is already refreshing, it is ultimately the flavorful gastronomic treats of chef Tonyboy Escalante that has everyone going back to Antonio's in Neogan, Tagaytay.

Indeed, there is more to the hype than meets the eye, which is why this early, reservations have been made for December.

The restaurant's secret? A passionate, unassuming chef who is meticulous about the sources for the ingredients he uses to whip up cuisine that's as unpretentious as he is. He delicately mixes spices and herbs freshly plucked from his garden so as not to compromise a dish's intrinsic flavor. Food is simple but never dull, and always a pleasurable experience.

Escalante's childlike demeanor never fails to enthrall his select clientele when he personally entertains them after preparing their meals. Truly this is one hands-on chef—from the kitchen to the dining area, to the garden to the market and more. That he loves what he is doing is an understatement. Small wonder that Antonio's is still up there with the stars after more than a year of operation.

For its new set menu, available until April, Antonio's introduces meals that are certainly worth the road trip. First are fresh oysters prepared in three different ways, each succulent meat teasingly shivering in its shell as you scoop it out. The mere sight of it is mouth-watering, and the taste so exquisitely delightful.

Appetizers, apéritif

Cultured in brackish water, the oysters, flown in fresh thrice weekly from Negros Occidental, can be had as they are—fresh and unadulterated. They have the glorious taste of sea-sweet meat with just a hint of saltiness and feel luscious in your mouth.

A little more adventurous is the Trio of Truffle Baked Oysters, with the earthy and sensual aroma of truffle oil in cream and chopped spinach. For meat lovers, there's the Gratinated Oysters with Foie Gras, also baked with cream and truffle oil but topped with the chef's signature foie gras.

Another appetizer is the Pan-Fried Cajuned Scallops Set on Fennel Risotto—no doubt one of the best risotto there is. The aromatic and sweet fennel is grown in his own garden, the chef says. This time of year the spice is in sea-

MAGICAL/ D4

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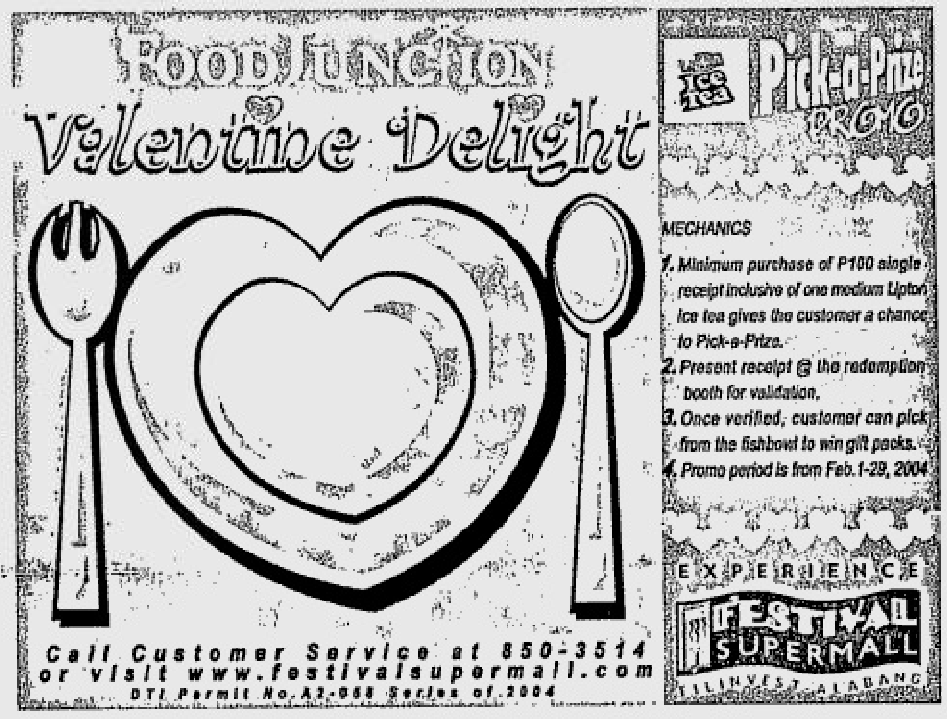
FEBRUARY 05 THURSDAY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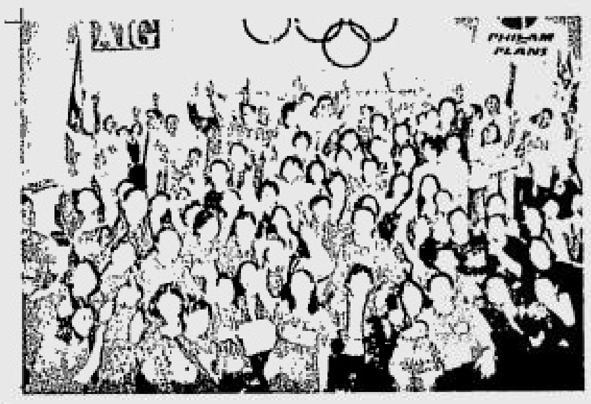
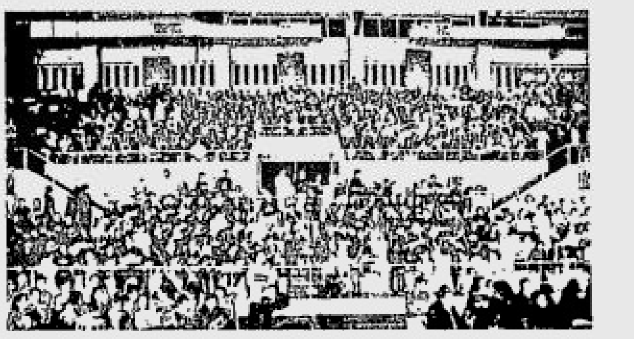


PHILAM

NUMBER 1

No.1 in Sales No.1 in Service No.1 in its Commitment to the Filipino people



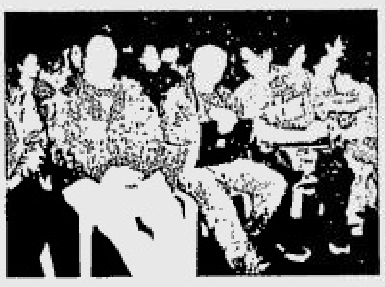
The festive atmosphere during Philam Plan's Victory Party sets the pace for this year's spirited challenge to not only maintain leadership position in the pre-need industry, but also to reach a never-before achieved annual sales goal.

Last year's sales in pension funds remain unchallenged as it cornered a sizeable market share of 25%*. For the past 6 years, Philam Plans has enjoyed industry leadership in the pension plan category. Philam Plans is also emerging as a company to reckon with in sales for educational plans cornering 19%* of the market for a leadership position in this category as of November 2003. Sales in life plans, on the other hand, have been steadily increasing.

With a sales goal set at a 30% growth rate versus 2003, this year's goal is no small feat. But the fever-pitch enthusiasm and excitement that sales counselors have shown during the recent Victory Rally is more than enough proof that the No. 1 sales force in the pre-need industry is willing to go the distance to make 2004 another unprecedented year.

"Philam Plans is the dominant pre-need company in the industry, and we also have the largest goals, the biggest targets," says Philam Plans President and CEO Jesus G. Hofileña. "No great accomplishment was ever achieved from a small desire. The boldness to think big is the indispensable starting point for realizing a dominant performance."

The celebration entitled "Dominate- The Power of One" started off with a parade of colors featuring the different sales agencies of the company--- Mindanao Sales Division are the Mighty Eagles, Visayas as the Stallions, Luzon as the Raging Bulls, Manila North as the Great Dragons and Manila South as the Roaring Lions. Philam Plans' victory does not merely refer to reaching its sales goals. More than their annual targets, Philam Plans consciously manifests its adherence to good corporate governance by complying with all rules and regulations of the Securities and Exchange Commission. It has since made its trust fund adequate, according to SEC standards, for the contracted benefits of its planholders. It also practices utmost care and financial prudence in its investment practices, steering clear from risky ventures that could compromise planholders' funds.



The Chairman of the Philam Plans Board and concurrent Philamlife President Jose L. Cuisia, Jr. was also present to congratulate the Philam Plans sales forces for achieving leadership status in the industry for the 3rd year. "The pre-need industry, while generally doing well, is under much public scrutiny. While the situation presents extra challenge for us, I urge you to take advantage of the opportunities it presents. Our partnership with industry leaders Philamlife and American International Group speaks of our strength and stability, as well as world class standards and professionalism. Who else among our colleagues in the industry can boast of solid financial backing comparable to ours? Who else evokes trust and confidence among their planholders? Perhaps no other name is more trusted today than Philam Plans. This alone should make us proud," concludes Mr. Cuisia.

Actuarial Advisers, Inc. November 2003 Sales Analysis Pre-Need Industry Report

The Good Life by Philam Plans

The Number One Sales Force gets the best Rewards and Incentives in the Pre-Need Industry

Philam Plans remains true to its commitment by providing a multitude of "thanks you's" to the driving force behind its success—its sales counselors. The successful years have given Philam Plans the momentum necessary to keep its employees and sale force more than satisfied to be a member of the No. 1 pre-need company in the Philippines. Above-standard commission makes up the meat of an enviable package that Philam Plans gives to its people. Furthermore, comprehensive training programs and modules on people development have not only professionalized the sales approach, imbued the counselors with skills and knowledge to make their careers dynamic, but more importantly, ensured that planholders will be delighted to put their investment when they are assisted by Philam Plans counselors on their financial planning needs.

Philam Plans unceasingly improves its perks and rewards system to come up with attractive packages guaranteed to challenge every sales counselor to up her sales and hit their mark. True to its commitment to be an agent's company of choice, Philam Plans has vowed to remain steadfast in its aim to assist in all facets of its sales team's professional careers and will continue to reward them on their outstanding performance.

Past Philam Plans globetrotters were given tips to beautiful tourist spots such as Hong Kong, Australia, China, Las Vegas, Canada and Spain. Truly at Philam Plans, you go places! This year, an exciting package of trips and luxury items has already been designed to further enliven the sales counselors drive to reach the top of their goals.

"Philam Plans is the undisputed leader of the pre-need industry because we are blessed with men and women who want to grow, who yearn to excel, who are passionate and committed to go out every single day and spread the gospel of preparedness through financial planning to as many people in the community as possible. We are privileged to be involved in something that not only provides us a means to realize our dreams, but also make a lasting and valuable contribution to the upliftment of the lives of our planholders and their families," says PPI President & CEO Jesus G. Hofileña.

> *we are blessed with men and women who want to grow, who yearn to excel, who are passionate and committed to go out every single day and spread the gospel of preparedness through financial planning*

Philam Plans has been giving full support to its sales counselors, not only with rewards but also by establishing a high standard for itself. The company's solid financial backing from its strong affiliations with Philamlife and American International Group of Companies (AIG) has earned for it the integrity crucial to deserve the trust of its many planholders.

"We are proud of our sales counselors and proud of our company that makes us feel confident that we are bringing the most secure and trusted pre-need products and services. This integrity that the Philam Group of Companies has instilled in everyone at Philam Plans does not only help make a sale, but also gives them the fulfillment of knowing we are true to the responsibility and privilege of helping out people plan their future and achieve financial stability. Philam Plans has attracted our sales counselors and employees because it has the best and strongest name in the industry. Philam Plans will continue to endure with the all-out and concrete effort of our dynamic sales team, and we will continue to reward them on their efforts with what the best the company has to offer," concludes Mr. Hofileña.

Philam Plans has given its solid promise never to waver on the commitment and responsibility as the No. 1 pre-need company. Moreover, the company has set itself to find ways to continually bring its standards even higher and anticipate what its people and stakeholders will require from it. This proactive approach in boosting its sales force and maintaining the company's integrity and reputation are meant to achieve the ultimate goals---- keep the planholders' trust and make them more than satisfied with what Philam Plans has to offer.

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List of Y2002 AME Awardees who celebrated their AME Y2003

NAME	AGENCY	REGION
Allan Tuazon	*AG Tuazon & Associates*	*Luzon 4*
Remando Arcibal	*Arcibal & Associates*	*Manila South 5*
Emma Barredo	*Barredo & Associates*	*Manila North 7*
Eduardo Benetua	*Benetua & Associates*	
Carolina Bautista	*C. Bautista & Associates*	*Manila South 1*
Janet Ramos	*China Agency*	*Mindanao 1*
Aurelio Clariño	*Clariño & Associates*	*Manila North 7*
Romerico Dulay	*Dulay & Associates*	*Manila South 3*
Don Eliseo Dy	*Dy & Associates*	
Ofelia Enriquez	*Enriquez & Associates*	*Manila North 7*
Francisco Bautista	*F. Bautista & Associates*	*Luzon 5*
Teresita Bautista	*Mc Arthur Agency*	*Visayas 2*
Rolando Liwag	*Liwag & Associates*	*Manila North 2*
Consesa Sison	*Masskara Agency*	*Visayas 2*
Elizabeth Mercado	*Mercado & Associates*	*Manila North 3*
Perfecto Nava (Desease)	*Nava & Associates*	*Manila North 2*
Amelia Yap	*Nickel Agency*	*Mindanao 1*
Wilma Piñero	*WA Piñero & Associates*	*Mindanao 1*
Graco Remo	*Remo & Associates*	*Manila North 2*
Ma. Ruthe Miranda	*RM Square & Associates*	*Manila North 3*
Samuel Tan	*Tan & Associates*	*Manila North 2*
Melania Tizon	*Tizon & Associates*	*Luzon 5*
Pierro Tolentino	*Tolentino & Associates*	
Victoria Crizaldo	*Crizaldo & Associates*	*Manila South 1*
Jose Ramirez	*Ramirez & Associates*	*Luzon 5*

Celebrate Feb. 14 in your home

INSTEAD of going out this Valentine's Day, why not have a party at home or a friend's place? You don't only avoid getting stuck in traffic; you also might save yourself some precious cash in the process.

Let Maya Kitchen help you plan romantic celebrations by signing up for its Pre-Valentine Bar Chow class, Feb. 7, 1:30-5 p.m. Learn to whip up enticing treats like Spinach Crackling with Wasabe Dressing, Crispy Crablet with Herb Dressing, Buffalo Wings, Hot and Spicy Chicken and Sizzling Mushrooms—Gambas Style.

A one-day Catering Seminar on Feb. 7 at 9 a.m.-3 p.m. will cover from getting a business license to setting up a buffet table. It will also include demos on how to prepare popular buffet dishes like Morcon, Baked Macaroni, All-Meat Paella, Galantina, 30-Minute Soy Chicken, Roast Pork, Special Fried Rice and Dessert.

Another Maya Kitchen class on Feb. 7 at 3-6 p.m. will cover Gulaman Delights, particularly Cathedral Window, Almond Gulaman, Taho and Cooler, Buko Pandan, Jello, Fruity Chewy Salad, and Coffee Mousse.

Finally, the Maya Kitchen Basic has cooking classes on Feb. 3-6 at 9 a.m.-3 p.m.

Call 8921185/8925011, or visit Maya Kitchen's office at 8/L Liberty Bldg., Arnaiz Ave. (formerly Pasay Road), Makati.

Get up close and personal with Pinoy coffee

FIGARO offers the opportunity to experience first-hand the distinctly Pinoy coffee experience through the 6th Figaro Farm Tour that will take participants to the towns of Amadeo and Tagaytay on Feb. 7.

Through "Going Organic," Figaro aims to show it is as committed to responding to the changing needs and tastes of consumers and the environment, as it is to making great coffee. The annual tour has allowed coffee lovers to learn how their favorite beverage is made and how the coffee industry supports people that depend on the bean for their livelihood.

This year's "Going Organic" will focus on organic coffee farming. The first leg of the trip includes a visit to Figaro's Barako Pilot Farm and organic pilot farm in Amadeo, Cavite. Petron Foundation is among the sponsors of the 2004 Figaro Farm Tour.

Figaro, which was established in 1993, has endeavored to create a Filipino coffee shop that can compete internationally. It has been active in promoting awareness of Philippine coffee here and abroad.

Those interested in joining the tour can register at any Figaro coffee outlet or e-mail zarahperez@figarocoffee.com. Call 8135836.

A copy of the registration form may be downloaded from www.savethebarako.org. Figaro Coffee Club members pay discounted registration fees.

Enjoy the Tower with friends

T.G.I. Friday's is the place to go when you want to hang out, have fun, and eat with friends.

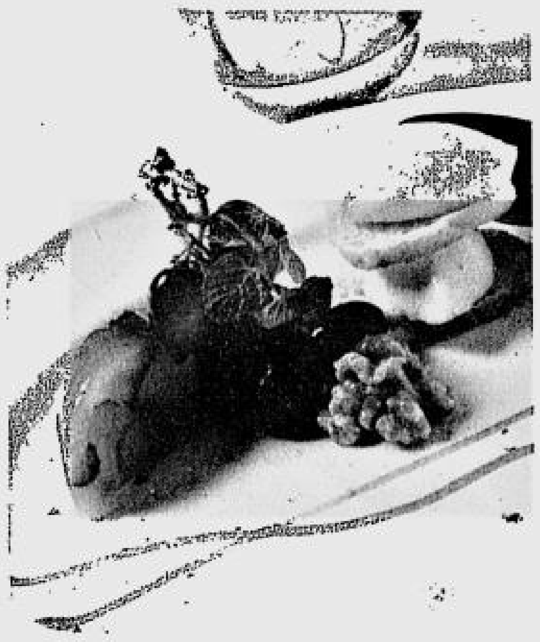
And its new and hottest dish, the Tower, a three-story dish combo, is tops when you want something to munch on when spending time with your school friends or office buddies.

The Tower, which has Riblets, Buffalo Chicken Strips, and Chips with cheese and salsa dip, is available for only P275.

Friday's also has a wide selection of drinks to complement the Tower—from its signature Smoothies and Flings to juices, cocktails, specialty drinks, beer, and liquor.

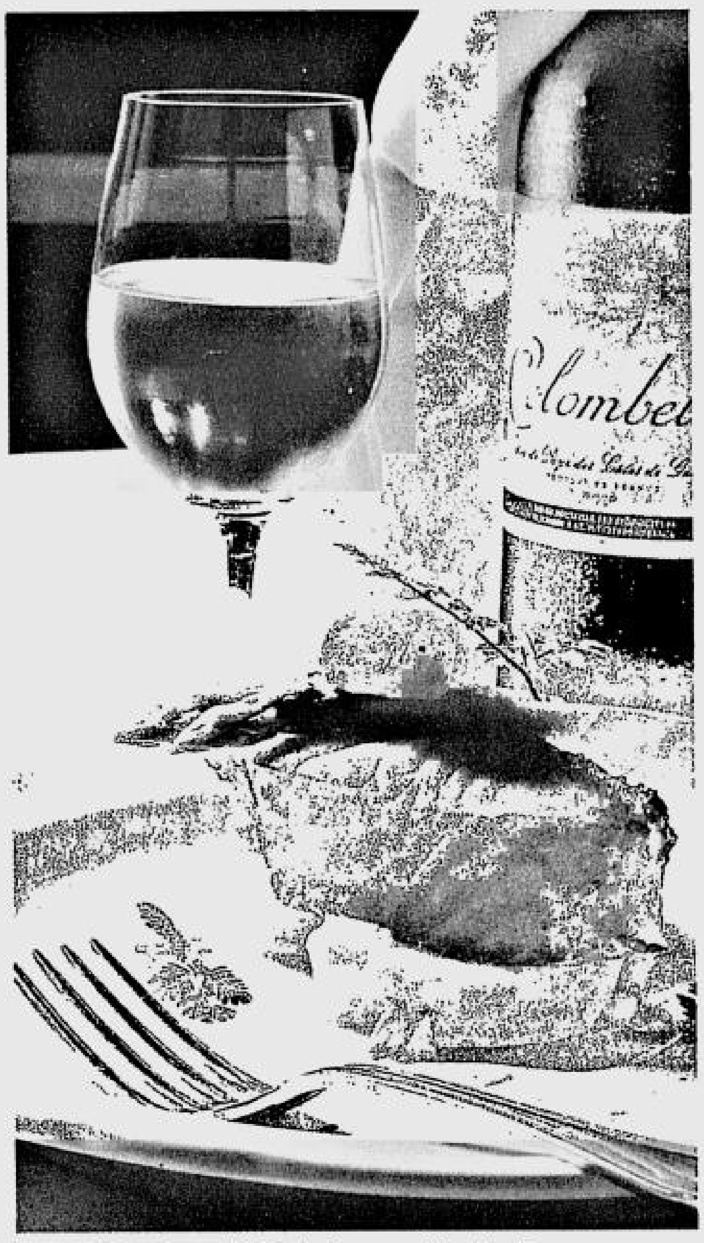
There are five T.G.I. Friday's branches to serve you at Glorietta 3, Robinsons Place Manila, Alabang Town Center, Quezon City, and The Brickroad at Sta. Lucia East.

PAN-FRIED Cajuned Scallops Set on Fennel Risotto



WHIPPED Brie de Meaux with Homemade Grape Jelly

FRESH oysters



CHILEAN Sea Bass with Truffle Sauce and Escallop Potato

Magical meal in a dream-like setting

From page D1

son, much to the surprise and joy of his friends and dinners. Escalante is hopeful the appetizer will be on the menu for the whole dry season.

More add-ons to his set menus are Whipped Brie de Meaux with Homemade Grape Jelly that goes well with the apéritif (it is, after all, known as the king of cheeses), and Crème de Casis Sorbet, a tangy-sweet calorie-saver cold treat that is light on the stomach.

Escalante's new entrée is Stewed Boer Goat in Cardamon with Gremolata Dried Fruit and Nuts Pilaf. The goats, another one of Negros Occidental's pride, are especially bred and raised for their meat, he says. The meat is tender to the bone, made interesting with the flavorsome gremolata-a parsley and garlic sauce—and dried fruit and nuts pilaf. (Antonio's, says Escalante, has an Indian supplier for its scrumptious pilaf.)

Set meals cost between P700-900, depending on the chosen entrée. The package includes soup (the very rich Cream of Roasted Tomato Soup with Valrhona Chocolate Shavings easily comes to mind), Fresh Salad from My Garden with Raspberry Vinaigrette (Pan-Seared Duck Liver Glazed with Honey and Peppercorn is optional), your choice of entrée, dessert (the most popular being the hot Double Chocolate Soufflé with Grand Marnier) and freshly brewed coffee or tea.

For reservations, call 0917-8992866.

E-mail the author at ajambora@inquirer.com.ph

DOUBLE Chocolate Soufflé with Grand Marnier

CHEF Tonyboy Escalante

Sweets for your Valentine

By Dorothy MJ Ferreria
Contributor

VALENTINE'S Day is just around the corner. For those who love to bake, this is the best time to show off gooey chocolate delights to family and friends. Here we have brownies, *pinipig* cups and chocolate cupcakes. Pack them in lipstick-red boxes and tie a nice silver ribbon for that Valentine look.

Brownies

½ c butter
120 g or 4 oz unsweetened baking chocolate
3 whole eggs
1 ½ c white sugar
2 tbsp light corn syrup
1 tsp pure vanilla extract
¾ c + 2 tbsp sifted all-purpose flour
1 c coarsely chopped nuts such as cashew, walnuts and almonds

Preheat the oven to 350ºF. Line the bottom of a rectangular baking pan measuring 8 x 12 inches with baking paper. Set aside.

Melt the butter and the chocolate together in a thick saucepan. Set aside to cool for a few minutes.

Beat the eggs in a large mixing bowl using a wire whip. Add the sugar and the corn syrup and beat until blended. Pour in the melted chocolate mixture and mix well. Add the vanilla and the flour and beat only until incorporated. Stir in half of the nuts.

Transfer the cookie batter to the prepared baking pan. Top with the remaining nuts and bake for 25-30 minutes or until a toothpick inserted in all four corners comes out clean.

Pinipig Cups

1 c puffed *pinipig* or rice crispies
500 g premium milk chocolate for baking, melted

Line mini muffin pans with fluted baking cups. Pour the *pinipig* in a mixing bowl. Add the melted chocolate and mix well. Fill the lined muffin cups with the mixture. Freeze until set.

Once the chocolate has set, keep them chilled.

Chocolate Cupcakes

¾ c butter
1 tsp vanilla extract
1 ¾ c white sugar
2 whole eggs
2 c sifted all-purpose flour
¾ c sifted dutch processed cocoa powder
1 ¼ tsp sifted baking soda
½ tsp fine salt
1 1/3 c water

Chocolate glaze:

½ c white sugar
½ c water
60 g or 2 oz unsweetened baking chocolate
120 g or 4 oz bittersweet baking chocolate
1 tbsp butter
1 tbsp light corn syrup

Preheat the oven to 350ºF. Line 60 mini cupcake molders with fluted baking cups. Set aside.

In a large mixing bowl and using an electric mixer, cream the butter and the vanilla together until light and fluffy. Gradually add the white sugar and beat at medium speed until blended. Add the eggs 1 at a time, beating well after each addition.

In a bowl combine flour, cocoa, soda and salt. Mix well with a spoon. Alternately add the flour mixture and the water to the butter mixture. Beat well after each addition. The batter will be a little runny.

Divide the cupcake batter equally among the prepared pans. Bake for 12-15 minutes or until a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean. Cool completely before applying the glaze.

To prepare the glaze, boil sugar and water together in a saucepan over medium heat until the sugar has dissolved completely. Remove from heat and quickly add the remaining ingredients. Mix vigorously with a wooden spoon until blended. Set aside to thicken to a spreading consistency.

Spread the prepared glaze over each cupcake. If desired, top with chopped nuts.

Note: Unsweetened, premium milk and bittersweet baking chocolates are available in specialty shops selling baking supplies.

Dorothy MJ Ferreria offers cooking, baking and cake decorating classes at Dorothy's Cooking School in Quezon City and in key provincial cities. Call 7217735 or e-mail dorothyferreria@skyinet.net.

	Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner
MONDAY	French toast with butter and hotcake syrup Vienna sausage Coffee, chocolate or iced tea Bananas with cottage cheese	*Sinigang na bangus* with *labanos* and *kangkong* Rice *Buko* gelatin	Chicken *adobo* with pineapple bits *Pechay gisado* Rice Fresh fruit platter
TUESDAY	Open-faced tuna sandwich Cheddar cheese Coffee, chocolate or fruit juice Papaya with *calamansi*	Instant ham and corn soup Pork steak with onion rings Vegetable chopsuey Canned lychee with ice	Misua soup with *patola* and fish balls Fried fish sarciado Rice *Matamis na saba* with sago and evap
WEDNESDAY	Oatmeal Omelet with spring onions and cheddar cheese Toasted bread Butter and cream cheese Coffee or fresh fruit juice	Cucumber salad with vinegar dressing *Menudo* Rice *Mais con hielo*	Chicken teriyaki Vegetable tempura Rice Fresh fruit platter
THURSDAY	Pan grilled *tapa* Rice Coffee, chocolate or iced tea Bananas	*Tahong* soup *Pinakbet* Rice Sweetened *nata de coco*	Coleslaw Beef steak with onion rings Rice Chocolate cupcakes
FRIDAY	Sardines sautéed in onions *Pandesal* Cheddar cheese Coffee, chocolate or fruit juice	Clear soup *Pancit canton* Pan grilled pork bellies Brownies	*Nilagang baka* Rice Fresh fruit platter
SATURDAY	Chicken tocino Garlic rice Eggs sunny side up Coffee or iced tea	Green salad Paella Roast chicken Pinipig cups	Steamed fish Lumpiang shanghai Fried rice *Hopia*
SUNDAY	Assorted *kakanin* Coffee, hot chocolate or *salabat* Fresh fruit platter	Chicken *mami* *Tokwa't baboy* Almond jelly	Roast beef Vegetables in cream sauce Bread *Buko* pie a la mode

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Celebrate Feb. 14 in your home

INSTEAD of going out this Valentine's Day, why not have a party at home or a friend's place? You don't only avoid getting stuck in traffic; you also might save yourself some precious cash in the process.

Let Maya Kitchen help you plan romantic celebrations by signing up for its Pre-Valentine Bar Chow class, Feb. 7, 1:30-5 p.m. Learn to whip up enticing treats like Spinach Crackling with Wasabe Dressing, Crispy Crablet with Herb Dressing, Buffalo Wings, Hot and Spicy Chicken and Sizzling Mushrooms—Gambas Style.

A one-day Catering Seminar on Feb. 7 at 9 a.m.-3 p.m. will cover from getting a business license to setting up a buffet table. It will also include demos on how to prepare popular buffet dishes like Morcon, Baked Macaroni, All-Meat Paella, Galantina, 30-Minute Soy Chicken, Roast Pork, Special Fried Rice and Dessert.

Another Maya Kitchen class on Feb. 7 at 3-6 p.m. will cover Gulaman Delights, particularly Cathedral Window, Almond Gulaman, Taho and Cooler, Buko Pandan, Jello, Fruity Chewy Salad, and Coffee Mousse.

Finally, the Maya Kitchen Basic has cooking classes on Feb. 3-6 at 9 a.m.-3 p.m.

Call 8921185/8925011, or visit Maya Kitchen's office at 8/L Liberty Bldg., Arnaiz Ave. (formerly Pasay Road), Makati.

Get up close and personal with Pinoy coffee

FIGARO offers the opportunity to experience first-hand the distinctly Pinoy coffee experience through the 6th Figaro Farm Tour that will take participants to the towns of Amadeo and Tagaytay on Feb. 7.

Through "Going Organic," Figaro aims to show it is as committed to responding to the changing needs and tastes of consumers and the environment, as it is to making great coffee. The annual tour has allowed coffee lovers to learn how their favorite beverage is made and how the coffee industry supports people that depend on the bean for their livelihood.

This year's "Going Organic" will focus on organic coffee farming. The first leg of the trip includes a visit to Figaro's Barako Pilot Farm and organic pilot farm in Amadeo, Cavite. Petron Foundation is among the sponsors of the 2004 Figaro Farm Tour.

Figaro, which was established in 1993, has endeavored to create a Filipino coffee shop that can compete internationally. It has been active in promoting awareness of Philippine coffee here and abroad.

Those interested in joining the tour can register at any Figaro coffee outlet or e-mail zarahperez@figarocoffee.com. Call 8135836.

A copy of the registration form may be downloaded from www.savethebarako.org. Figaro Coffee Club members pay discounted registration fees.

Enjoy the Tower with friends

T.G.I. Friday's is the place to go when you want to hang out, have fun, and eat with friends.

And its new and hottest dish, the Tower, a three-story dish combo, is tops when you want something to munch on when spending time with your school friends or office buddies.

The Tower, which has Riblets, Buffalo Chicken Strips, and Chips with cheese and salsa dip, is available for only P275.

Friday's also has a wide selection of drinks to complement the Tower—from its signature Smoothies and Flings to juices, cocktails, specialty drinks, beer, and liquor.

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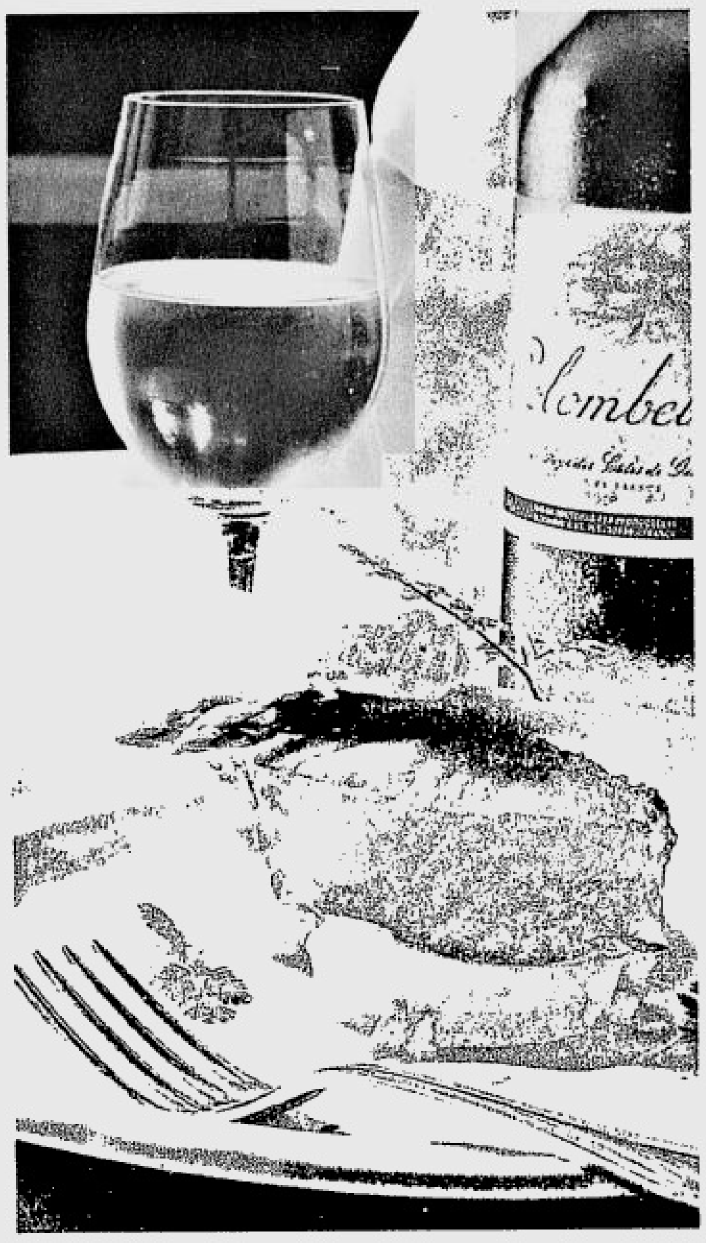

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